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ENGLAND  
IN THE EIGHTEEN-EIGHTIES  
TOWARD A SOCIAL BASIS FOR FREEDOM



HELEN MERRELL LYND



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A WARTIME BOOK

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■

TO  
ANDREA and STAUGHTON  
and  
My FATHER and MOTHER

■





## *Foreword*

THIS BOOK has been in preparation during a number of years. Inevitably it reflects different stages in my thinking, and any acknowledgment of the many persons who have contributed to that thinking is particularly inadequate.

In the preparation of the book I owe incomparably more to Robert S. Lynd than to any other person. His hand appears in the organization of the material, in the conceptual analysis, and in the writing of several chapters, especially of Chapters II and VII. What he has contributed is beyond any possibility of adequate recognition.

It was Carlton J. H. Hayes who first directed my attention to the importance of the decade of the 'eighties in social history. J. Bartlett Brebner read the entire manuscript with great discernment and gave me invaluable criticisms. Charles E. Trinkaus Jr., Maxwell Geismar, Jean Carroll Trepp, Emery Neff, and Jacques Barzun gave me important suggestions on parts of the manuscript.

Friends in England were generous in helping to supply details which are not readily accessible to an American. I recall with especial pleasure a day spent with Sidney and Beatrice Webb and conversations with Graham Wallas, John Burns, R. H. Tawney, G. D. H. Cole, Harold Laski, and J. L. and Barbara Hammond.

Catherine Turner not only had great patience in the typing of the manuscript but through resourcefulness and care in checking of sources saved me from errors I might otherwise have committed. Patricia Beesley was a keen and delightful companion in proof reading and index making;

the book would have profited by her counsel at earlier stages.

Footnotes have been divided: those that contain references only have been placed at the back of the book; others appear at the bottom of the page.

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# INTRODUCTION



# I. *The Eighteen-Eighties*

A LITTLE more than half a century ago England was living through a national crisis. Of this period through which his father helped to lead the nation Winston Churchill has written:

It was the end of an epoch. The long dominion of the middle classes, which had begun in 1832, had come to its close and with it the almost equal reign of Liberalism. The great victories had been won. All sorts of lumbering tyrannies had been toppled over. Authority was everywhere broken. Slaves were free. Conscience was free. Trade was free. But hunger and squalor and cold were also free and the people demanded something more than liberty . . . How to fill the void was the riddle that split the Liberal party.<sup>1</sup>

England in 1880 was aware of a new apprehension about the future. Half a decade of world depression had brought fear of foreign competition and imperialist rivalry. While a century of world industrial supremacy had engendered a vast complacency within England, insistent questions were now being raised: Were the 'days of great trade profits over'? Was 'liberal enterprise' at an end? Had the world 'at this precise year of grace come to the "end of its tether" in regard to the development of its industrial resources'? \* Looking

\* T. H. S. Escott, *England: Her People, Polity, and Pursuits*, London, Chapman and Hall, 1885, pp. 123-4. This volume by the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, covering in 600 pages topics ranging from 'Popular Amusements' to 'Imperial England' and quoted frequently in this study, was reviewed as follows by *The Economist* at the time of its publication: 'Mr. Escott's subject is vast and complicated . . . he has given a wonderfully faithful picture of our daily life . . . The tone and spirit of the book, too, are eminently English . . . He is conservative without being reactionary, liberal, yet not subversive . . .' (31 January 1885, Vol. 43, pp. 194-5).

back from the nineteen-forties we see in the years following the Congress of Berlin the sharp emergence of the questions regarding the future of the British Empire and even of industrial society with which we are now so familiar.

On 1 January 1880, the *London Times* began its leading editorial:

A new year begins every morning . . . But there are not the less 'tides in the affairs of men' . . . we have many motives for exchanging with a more than usual heartiness the customary wishes for 'a happy New Year,' . . . We leave behind us in 1879 a year which has combined more circumstances of misfortune and depression than any within general experience . . . The combination of untoward influences during 1879 has been unique . . . War in two continents . . . Commerce stagnant . . . Agriculture has suffered from an adversity so severe as to impose a heavy burden upon all the classes connected with land . . . weak points in our financial organization are revealed . . . party spirit in politics has displayed a bitterness which the most experienced politicians confess to exceed anything within their remembrance.

Five days later *Reynolds' Newspaper* said editorially:

Eighteen seventy-nine is gone, and we have all reason to be thankful that it is now only a record . . . of disaster . . . the dullest year we remember in trade, and the most disastrous in agriculture . . .

In 1879 the foundations of great deeps have been moved. Men no longer believe in the divine right of eldest sons, either to crowns or under entails. The bad harvests of late have disclosed that . . . there are not three incomes derivable from the land . . . not three or more in trade . . . It is true that we have reached the seventh and last session of the worst Parliament that ever sat in England since the days of Charles the First, and that is . . . a distinct encouragement to the people.\*

\* 6 January 1880. *Reynolds' Weekly Newspaper*, which had begun as a Chartist organ, later became commercialized, but according to Sidney Webb, was in the 'eighties as representative as any publication of labor opinion. It was, at that time, an eight-page penny paper published weekly in two editions, Saturday night and Sunday morning. It gave prominence to foreign news, police news, colliery and other labor disasters, Irish distress, and Liberal—later Labour—party politics.



Reading the fears and hopes of our own time into a comparable period of the past can easily become an over-plausible occupation. But there is much in the England of the eighteen-eighties as compared with America in the nineteen-thirties and 'forties to lend support to the belief that changes in life and thought in England not infrequently precede by about half a century similar changes in the United States. Certain developments in industry and in social philosophy in the two countries have been similar. But America's later industrialization, use of the 'frontier,' and greater distance from Europe have given rise in the two nations to different timings and sets of urgencies. England from the eighteen-eighties on had to face problems that America has been able down to the present time largely to disregard. For America, too, these years of grace are now past. If we do not press the historical comparison too far some insight into possible directions of change in this country—their opportunities and hazards—may be gained from a study of this critical period in England.

Then, as now, theoretical panic was added to practical confusion. There was, as Cliffe Leslie pointed out, a new sense of being in the dark, surrounded by the unknown: 'it is the consciousness of not seeing their way on the part of people that is new.'<sup>2</sup>

The discrepancy between material abundance and satisfaction of human wants was bringing many echoes of the protests of Sismondi and Carlyle. It was not of America in the nineteen-thirties but of England in the eighteen-eighties that it was written: 'What a satire upon our boasted civilization that plenty should bring misery to many and that people should actually starve because of the very abundance.'<sup>3</sup> In the 'eighties *Progress and Poverty*, selling over 60,000 copies in England in three years, focused attention on the problem with which the National Resources Planning Board grappled in the United States: how can available resources and skill go further toward meeting human needs? A volume on economic developments in England and on the Continent, published in 1889, stated in its Preface:

Out of these changes will probably come further disturbances, which to many thoughtful and conservative minds seem full of menace—a nurturing of the barbarians from within rather than as of old from without, an attack on the whole present organization of society, and even the permanency of civilization itself.<sup>4</sup>

Accepted institutions and accepted philosophies were being sharply challenged by changes in economic conditions. A letter to *Reynolds' Newspaper* in 1880 said:

When he wrote [his] description of jobbery and callousness to the poor in aristocratic countries, it would almost seem that DeTocqueville had the government of Lord Beaconsfield in view . . . And it may confidently be predicted that unless we reform and renovate most of our institutions, and abolish many, nations will fast give us the go-by in commerce and other matters, and we shall no more be able to compete with America than our old stage-coaches of fifty years back could hope to run successfully against the railroads of the present.<sup>5</sup>

Then, as now, political 'democracy' served as a shibboleth and a symbol of hope with an accompaniment of skepticism about almost every one of its actual instruments. Re-shuffling of political alignments and of political principles to meet immediate situations seemed to be the answer to the disillusionment with Parliament and with parties. Liberals observed gleefully that the Conservative Party as a party had ceased to exist. Tory legislative acts took on the character of political scoops. The 'Tories held that if reforms must be passed in any event, they had best be effected under the auspices of their own party, a method which the *Spectator* characterized as an effort to turn the flank of radicalism.<sup>6</sup> Liberals of the old school, in revolt against their own party, cried for leaders who would show 'that they will not slip down the inclined plane on which we are all now standing . . . letting go of all that has hitherto been understood as sound Liberal Principles.' ' Even before the party split over Home Rule for Ireland in the middle of the decade it was apparent that the right wings of the Conservative and Liberal parties and the left wings of each were closer to each

other than were the two extremes within each party. 'Conservative' and 'Liberal' were ceasing to have any clear meaning.

Remedies for lack of political vitality were sought in changes in Parliamentary procedure, in exchanging the 'ins' for the 'outs' in government, and in inducing better men to run for office. There was beginning to be disaffection with politics and with political parties altogether, an attitude of cynicism about *political* action which was to reach more complete expression in Chamberlain's 'Patriotism before politics' slogan of 1900. Awareness of social and economic problems was increasing and 'politics' had not solved them. Social security, health and housing, the position of labor were centers of controversy.

The term 'social classes' was ceasing to be a largely neutral phrase descriptive of a familiar social fact and was taking on a belligerent, divisive reference. Jevons wrote in 1882 of 'the great evil of the present day' as 'the entire disunion of the labourer and the capitalist.'<sup>8</sup> A union movement splitting off from the core of organized trade unionism succeeded in the late 'eighties in organizing unskilled workers in England. What the C.I.O. is to the A. F. of L., this 'new unionism' was to the established Brahminism of the British trade-union movement. And these and various other organizations branded as 'socialistic' or 'communistic' were fought, not by a 'Liberty League,' but by the more explicitly named 'Liberty and Property Defense League.'

By the end of the decade, labor organization had reached a point where *The Economist* was lamenting that

'The organization of labour is year after year becoming more complete, and under existing arrangements there is no adequate protection against an abuse of the power which that organization has placed in the hands of the few men by whom it is controlled.'<sup>9</sup>

In the same year Sir Henry Lucy was moved for the first time in his voluminous diaries to mention the workingman. Viewing the procession of Royal Commissions, Select Com-

mittees, and Bills 'disgorged' by Parliament to aid labor, he exclaimed: 'The shadow of the Working Man lies dark over the House of Commons . . . The horny hand is at its throat.'<sup>10</sup>

England was developing increasing awareness of national and of imperial destiny. The country was becoming more and more a part of the rest of the world. England could not remain isolated from her own empire, which had now reached nearly eight million square miles and 268 million people, and from countries of the Continent and the United States, whose claims to a share of world trade were making them rivals of British commercial supremacy. At home Englishmen were beginning to emerge from an assured isolationism in which to the man in the provinces 'continentals were people who provided us with music-hall entertainers, barbers, bakers, cheap clerks, and picturesque guests to see the recurrent Jubilee.'<sup>11</sup> Within Great Britain communication was increasing and isolation diminishing. Increased literacy, cheaper printing, and easier transportation were bringing the people of England nearer together in large concerns of nation and empire and in small, intimate habits of daily life. The swift popularization of a new invention or a new style was noted by Escott, writing in 1885:

The last new mode finds its way to the neighborhood market town very nearly at the same time that it does to the capital of the empire; and cheap bonnets of the latest shape, or ribbons of the approved tint, are displayed in the window of the village shop a very little while after they have first been exposed to the view of the buyers of Regent Street.<sup>12</sup>

New problems were being considered. 'Liberty' was less taken for granted; the relation between freedom and authority was of interest to others than Matthew Arnold, and was becoming a subject of popular discussion. 'The momentous problem of our age,' wrote Bishop Westcott, 'is the reconciliation of authority with freedom.'<sup>13</sup> T. H. Green, applying his Hegelian philosophy to such questions as the Ground Game Act and the Employers' Liability Act, said that:

The most pressing political questions of our time are questions of which the settlement, I do not say necessarily involves an interference with freedom of contract, but is sure to be resisted in the sacred name of individual liberty, not only by all those who are interested in keeping things as they are, but by others to whom freedom is dear for its own sake, and who do not sufficiently consider the conditions of its maintenance in such a society as ours.<sup>14</sup>

The discovery of the kind of social organization compatible with democratic individualism was a problem of this period as of our own.

The chief significance of the 'eighties, indeed, is that this period marked the beginning of a new phase in the recurrent struggle for individual freedom.

At the close of the decade statements of this problem which had been taken largely for granted for over half a century were being outmoded. A new phrasing of the issue was becoming a part of the climate of thought. This formulation took its particular character not only from new economic developments, which had broken earlier molds of thought, but, also, from persistent ways of thought and feeling which inevitably colored the new conceptions of individual liberty and social relations that were emerging.

At least three earlier strains involved in the conflict between freedom and authority are basic to any understanding of the new forms of social philosophy which were taking shape in the 'eighties:

1. The specific character structure developed in Europe, and especially in England, through several centuries of capitalism and Protestantism, which made people emotionally ready to respond to certain ideas and to reject others and to give to new ideas a special form and coloring.
2. The particular concepts associated with freedom and those associated with authority as a result of the trends centering in the French Revolution.
3. The special outcome of these various trends in England in the mingling of Utilitarianism and Evangelicism.

The transition from the 'medieval' to the 'modern' world had meant the loss of certain kinds of security which men had derived from a known and accessible means of salvation and a known place in the social order.\* It had also meant enhanced opportunities for spiritual and economic freedom and hence greater demands on the resources of human beings. In Calvinist doctrine man was given no assurance of salvation through prescribed rituals; his fate was determined by divine election; he could manifest it, but he could not basically alter it. In the developing capitalist society, man had no secure place in the economic system; his fate was determined by the favorable or unfavorable state of the market. Doctrine and social order had become linked together. They were not linked as in the theory of medieval Catholicism, according to which economic activities were one aspect of personal conduct and could lead to or keep one from the real business of life—salvation. As doctrine and social order were now linked man could not contribute toward his salvation, but he could manifest a state of grace through work or prosperity; he could not be sure of his place in the economic order, but he could manifest his decency and effort through hard work.† Neither spiritual nor material institutions provided a sure basis for confidence. Both offered an endless progression of activity with no final assurance at any point.

The outcome of this situation was a character structure rooted in caution and anxiety rather than in confidence. Religious and economic doctrine encouraged an acceptance of immediate facts and a distrust of any effort to alter them.

\* See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1930; R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1926; Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, New York, Farrar and Rinehart, 1941; also, for a criticism of Weber, H. M. Robertson, *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism*, Cambridge University Press, 1933. The position taken here is that Protestantism did not 'cause' the character structure of capitalism, but that both Protestantism and capitalism tended to develop the same type of character, although Weber over-stresses the contrast between the Catholic and the Protestant ethic.

† Cf. Ch. viii, pp. 327-32 for further discussion of differences in the Catholic and Protestant attitudes towards work.

An attempt to change conditions was a tinkering with the law of God or of Nature, and therefore both dangerous to social welfare and impious. Thus men looked for an assurance which was never quite granted but which found its readiest substitute in material success. They tended to lay hold of tangible, proximate results in the here-and-now world. The rewards of an expanding industrialism helped to focus the attention of the middle class upon such satisfactions.

Since economic success was the token of religious sanctity, failure to achieve success implied lack of divine favor, and therefore moral inadequacy and personal guilt. Fear of this manifestation of moral inadequacy as well as desire for economic rewards was a spur to hard work. The man who worked hard even if he did not gain success was at least demonstrating his fear of God. He could do nothing in a constructive sense to change the social situation, but he could *reinforce* the mandates of God and Nature through his own achievement and through seeing to it that all men had equal opportunity to work as he did. If hard work did not always bring success, or if economic success did not bring inner satisfaction, the tendency was not to question the goals of the system or the assumptions on which it rested, but to push back further any economic intervention and to secure freer conditions for individual striving. That was the meaning of the shift from mercantilism to *laissez-faire*.<sup>15</sup>

The French Revolution was a flaming symbol of human rights and human dignity. For a century the Declaration of the Rights of Man was a charter of liberty for the people. But as it wove itself into nineteenth-century consciousness the liberty was freedom from restraint and the people were the middle class. Property was the instrument and the sign of this liberty. The French Revolution emphasized the conception of freedom as freedom from interference, especially in economic activities, and of authority as a threat to that freedom. The mercantilists had sought to force economic policy into the service of political power as an end in itself. In the doctrines embodied in the French Revolution, means

and ends changed places; <sup>16</sup> political power should be used only as a means to maintain the conditions for free enterprise; there should be no intervention by the State except to establish the law and order necessary to protect life and property. It did not at once appear that the development of police power and a paid civil service gave the strictly limited State much more effective weapons than the earlier nominally autocratic State had possessed. This narrowed but more effective authority of the State operated against surviving local medieval regulations in favor of the industrial middle class. In England in the eighteenth century a multitude of conflicting local economic customs perpetuated disorganization, which interfered with the rising industry and commerce; at the same time England had a social and political unity based upon the surviving feudal structure of a landed aristocracy.<sup>17</sup> In the nineteenth century this situation was reversed, through the medium of similar forces and a similar conception of liberty to those that in France created the Revolution.

This conception of liberty, this new liberalism, assumed a distinctive form in English Utilitarianism. Bentham himself emphasized both aspects of liberalism: on the one hand, the economic independence of separate individuals embodied in *laissez-faire*, and, on the other, the equality and uniformity, to be enforced if necessary by the State, which such social atomism demanded. The old regime had been unable to maintain the law and order necessary for trade. Bentham advocated uniformity of law maintained through centralized authority. He was able to reconcile belief in complete individual autonomy in economic life with belief in centralized political authority by means of the 'greatest happiness' principle. But the majority of Bentham's followers, from James Mill on, tended to ignore his advocacy of state power to enforce equality and uniformity and erected a social philosophy based upon his economic individualism.

This philosophy involved replacing a structured society unified on the basis of a feudal social hierarchy by nominal social atomism. The central assumption on which this phi-



losophy rested was that if each individual acted according to his own economic interest, the unco-ordinated acts of separate individuals would add up to social welfare. The police system, the price system, the penny post were simply necessary unifying devices. Carlyle described this theory of society as anarchy plus the constable. Actually economic individualism was not anarchy, but a dissolution of upper-class and church authority in favor of middle-class authority, of authority backed by status in favor of authority backed by possession. This new authority operated impersonally through the law of the market. The new authority was concealed by impersonal law. The new inequality was concealed by the theory that everyone operated as a competing atom equal to every other.

It might seem that the Protestant Evangelical tradition would have modified somewhat the emphasis of Utilitarianism on the things of this world. But both laid stress on hard work, on sacrificing present happiness to future gain, and on the personal responsibility of the individual. In other words, as on many occasions since the Reformation, the internalization of guilt and responsibility encouraged by Protestantism served as a stabilizing influence, checking protest against social conditions and counteracting the pull of other unruly tendencies in the culture. Halévy believes that it was Evangelicalism which prevented occurrence of the revolution implicit in the 'paradoxical freedom' of nineteenth-century England. He defines this freedom negatively: economic freedom as the superseding of custom, corporate trading, and state regulation by free contract within unbridled competition; <sup>18</sup> political freedom as a systematic weakening of the executive; <sup>19</sup> religious freedom as the autonomy of sects to form 'a host of little States' outside the Established Church. Halévy found the main problem of nineteenth-century England in the fact that, given political and economic anarchy, the country seemed to be destined during this century for 'a state of ceaseless revolution,' which was prevented by the 'powerful moral authority' <sup>20</sup> of religion. This moral authority strengthened the Utilitarian insistence on the separate

responsibility of each individual. It reinforced the concept of freedom as freedom from restraint, ignoring the positive conditions for freedom.

The two strains of laissez-faire and of social organization which appeared in Bentham's thinking persisted both in practice and in theory throughout the century. Certain medieval restraints on economic freedom remained on the statute books well into the century: the Elizabethan law regulating wages was repealed in 1813 and that regulating apprentices in 1814; 'forestalling and regrating' only ceased formally to be crimes in 1844, and usury in 1833; <sup>21</sup> the Corn Laws were repealed in 1846 and the Navigation Laws in 1849.

But even while these forms of social regulation were being discarded, others were temporarily, or in fragmentary form, replacing them. The Police Laws and the Poor Law reinforced atomism, but factory laws and health laws were laying the foundation for centralized authority used to promote human happiness. Throughout the 'thirties and 'forties, Chadwick, loyal to the early Benthamism, in field after field from factories to sanitation, was laying down forms of organization which could be referred to as precedents when proposals for centralized planning could again get a hearing.\* Shaftesbury had no glimmering of the systematic philosophy behind all this, but his broad humanitarianism made him applaud and assist.

Nor was philosophical opposition to the theory of individualism lacking. Protests were heard both from the left and from the right. The doctrine of liberalism, with its implications of human rights, human dignity, liberty, and equality, would seem to demand unlimited faith in the common man. Critics from the left, dissatisfied with the social situation in England, urged that these implications be taken seriously. The culmination of their demands in the ferment of the 'eighties appears in this book.

Critics on the right, relatively content with the social situ-

\* See Ch. iv, pp. 145-6, and Ch. v, pp. 166-7, for discussion of the health legislation initiated by Chadwick.

ation, feared that the democratic implications of individualism would be taken seriously. They stressed the danger of trust in the mass of the people.<sup>22</sup> James Fitzjames Stephen, Henry Maine, and William Lecky all opposed the extension of suffrage to 'the lower classes.' Stephen held that the growth of liberty, in the sense of democracy, diminished originality and that the mass of people were incapable of improvement; Sir Henry Maine criticized democratic faith in progress and denied that most men know their own best interests; Lecky argued for an elite and against democratic contamination of Parliament, at the same time that he upheld freedom for property owners.

But despite variations in practice and questioning of theory, economic liberalism was, in Chesterton's words, the philosophy in office. Through a large part of the nineteenth century it remained the rationale by which the majority of thinking Englishmen interpreted what they were doing. This philosophy of liberalism was valuable in clearing away surviving forms of authority and organization from an earlier time; its proponents did not recognize the discrepancy between what they thought they were doing and what they were actually doing. Bent as they were on abolishing the static and sporadic feudal authorities inherited from earlier centuries, they did not realize that they were actually creating new authorities to reinforce individualism. Recognition that the philosophy gave no relevant basis for what was being done or needed to be done in England was delayed until the last quarter of the century, for up to then rapid technological advance and the comfortable primacy of England as an industrial nation had proved deceptive. The relative homogeneity of England, the fact that she had no separate nationalities, and that land-owning families were united by ties of blood with the rising manufacturing interests,<sup>23</sup> combined with the fact that she had been so far out ahead in the industrial and commercial revolutions to make her complacently unaware of the conflicts inherent in her own way of life.

But three quarters of the way through the century the seemingly infallible English formula was thrown into question. The 'great depression,' commencing in the mid 'seventies and lasting for a decade, was a body-blow; but depressions had come and gone before, and England could solace herself with the fact that this was a world depression. More disconcerting were certain ominous secular trends: younger nations, notably Germany and the United States, which had learned the industrial arts from Britain, were beginning to rival their preceptor and pinch her markets; while, internally, cracks in the economic and social scene, which could be ignored when prosperity was unquestioned, were now becoming more menacing. The working class were drifting away from a remote sharing of middle-class hopes after the turbulent 'forties and were beginning to use their new franchise to press for collectivist legislation. Economic prosperity had lent a false air of stability and security to social atomism. As long as it was only the workers who did not share in the feast provided by a *laissez-faire* economy, hopes could be invoked and nothing need be done. But when even middle-class prosperity was called in question confidence in the formula of well-being was shaken. The very expectations that had been built up by the theory of *laissez-faire*, and the unparalleled economic progress under that theory now brought a sharp reaction. While the progress of the 'Wonderful Century' lasted, even those who did not notably share in it could to some extent live on hope. But with the basis of expectation thrown into question, they began to demand more direct satisfaction.

Satisfaction with material prosperity had covered but not changed the caution and anxiety which lay deep in the men who were heirs to the new freedom of the modern world. They had not discovered a way of life which enabled them to realize this freedom. 'Individualism,' which had seemed to be a formula for freedom, had not only proved impossible to carry out, but for large groups in the community had proved an illusory basis of freedom. By the early 'eighties, in Parliament, in industry, in philosophical discussion, the

tradition of individualism struggled with emerging concepts of social organization. The capacity for orderly absorption of disorder and internal conflict, on which England prided herself, and which had been great during the decades of economic expansion, suddenly contracted.

In the strong tide of English prosperity of the mid-nineteenth century, discrepancies between what men did and the philosophy by which they guided or rationalized their actions were not so important; for faulty steering of the boat was constantly corrected by the strong pull of the forward-moving current. In a wide channel it is possible to barge along casually without affecting the main course; but as more and more obstructions appear, precision of steering becomes more important. A crude or discrepant philosophy is tolerable when chance is favoring. In times of pressure, difficulties accumulate, and the gap between what people think and what they do may become decisive.

Because favoring factors had so long obscured the discrepancy between social fact and social theory, the recognition of this discrepancy, when it did come, came relatively swiftly, and abruptly. Between the late 'seventies and the end of the 'eighties the gradual whittling away of economic individualism that had been going on in practice was suddenly recognized in theory, as was also the patent fact that this gradual adaptation was not enough. England in the 'eighties found articulate expression for new norms, new criteria of social values, new conceptions of freedom. Not, of course, that new ideologies emerged which were without precedent. Rather, one can say that laws or public policies which were but defensively justified, or were reluctant concessions in a particular case, at the beginning of the decade had by the end become the criteria by which other cases were judged. As some periods of history show rapid changes in inventions or technological advance so in others changes in thought and social attitudes become suddenly apparent. The decade of the 'eighties in England was such a time; between its beginning and its close, an ideology half a century old yielded to a new phrasing of social problems and

an effort to find new paths to their solution. England, from James Mill to Herbert Spencer, thought it had mastered the conditions of freedom by defining them negatively. England in the 'eighties was facing the problem of how to create positive conditions of freedom as we must face it today.

The following chapters, accordingly, attempt to trace the nature and limits of the changes in social philosophy that took place, why and how these changes occurred at this particular time, and what part different social institutions played in the changes. Since economic liberalism was an ultimately untenable design for industrial society, one can say that from the long-term point of view this study is concerned simply with the inevitable adaptation of social *mores* to the demands of an increasingly complex society. But recognizing that adaptations of social theory and social fact to each other are bound sooner or later to occur leaves the particular manner of these adaptations still to be accounted for. So from the short-run point of view, this study traces how and why the changes in England in the 'eighties happened when they did, in the particular forms that they took, and through particular institutional and personal intermediaries.

Part I studies the interplay of certain long-term trends and particular events in bringing about a changed social philosophy:

a. What long-term trends in the material conditions of life, in the economic system, were bound, sooner or later, to bring into question a laissez-faire philosophy? By the 'eighties what options were closed by economic developments? What factors had to be taken into account by any philosophy based on the realities of economic life?

b. What were the social philosophies—the theories of human nature and motivation, and of the structure and problems of society—available to Englishmen at the beginning of the 'eighties with which to interpret the problems presented by their material culture? How closely did the social theories available correspond to actual conditions, and where were they inadequate in their interpretation?

How was liberalism changing its function from a radical philosophy, a 'utopia' in Mannheim's sense, to a conservative philosophy? <sup>24</sup>

c. How did people become conscious of the discrepancy between what they were doing and what they thought they were doing? How did special intruding events hasten this process, forcing attention to the problems?

d. How did the changing social philosophy manifest itself in the 'eighties? In what situations—national, local, usual, exceptional—did the new philosophy appear?

Part II considers more closely the role different institutions played in the emerging changes in philosophy: How did different organized groups see England and her problems in the 'eighties? In what respects did they support economic individualism, in what ways did they foster change, and where were they neutral? Such questions as these will be considered in regard to Political Parties, Organized Labor, Religious Institutions, Education, and in regard to certain groups whose primary concern was social innovation.

Finally, the study attempts an appraisal of the nature of the changes in the concepts of freedom and of authority which occurred. How far was the new philosophy shaped and limited by old frames of thought? Where did it fall short and where was it an actual advance toward the realization of freedom?





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PART I

CHANGES IN THE 'EIGHTIES

■



## II. *Material Environment*

ANY period of major advance in material achievement tends to be deceptive to people living in it. Surface manifestations rarely reflect truly underlying movements of change. These cumulate, so to speak, off-stage, beyond the public view. The emphasis upon tangible here-and-now goals made the people of nineteenth-century England particularly prone to co-operate in this double life of the culture.

During the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, material development in England had constantly outrun expectation. In growth of population, in technological achievements, in wealth and comfort, manifest evidences of expansion everywhere lent support to the belief that, whatever the shortcomings of the past, today was good and to-morrow would be better. By the beginning of the fourth quarter of the century, however, underlying material changes were working themselves to the surface, and the confident mood of England began to falter.

What had been happening, slowly in the early decades of the century and more rapidly after its midpoint, was that the jostling industrialism at home and abroad was exacting a price: the disappearance of the old England, solid, unified, and coherent in social structure, the England upon whose way of life and position in the world the working beliefs and symbols of the nation had been reared.

Nor could imperative processes of change be reversed, save at the cost of the disappearance of Britain from the swelling tides of the modern world. Ways of life which had been regarded as 'normal' had become exceptional, and if men had eyes to see things as they were, not as they believed them to

be, many 'exceptional' procedures had become normal. Certain possibilities were ruled out, certain options were closed. England could not—except through chaos and reversing the process of industrialization—return to being a nation of independent, competing farmers and business men, each largely unconcerned with his neighbors. Nor could England as a nation return to her position of easy dominance among the trading nations of the world.

Industrial capitalism thrives by feeding an abundant working class to its machines. And a rising standard of living and a falling death-rate had steadily augmented the numbers of 'hands' available. The nearly 35,000,000 people in Great Britain in 1881 were almost double the population at the time of Waterloo; and in the decade preceding 1881 the population had increased by 11 per cent. The crude birth-rate was high, not below 30 per 1,000 in any important town, though it was beginning to fall from the maximum of 35½ for England and Wales in 1871-5. Some industrial towns still had in 1881 a birth-rate approaching 40. Everywhere births outnumbered deaths; the excess of births over deaths was more than 14 per 1,000 yearly.<sup>1</sup> In 1851 the density of the population was 308 persons per square mile; in 1861, 345; in 1871, 390; in 1881, 466;<sup>2</sup> in 1891, 497.<sup>3</sup>

If this more crowded England was providing the 'easy labor market' coveted by industry, it was also forcing England to view less complacently the traditional comfortable agricultural base of the nation. For more hands in production meant more persons to consume. Here in agriculture, the first major series of breaks in the national policy of laissez-faire was to occur, and, having occurred here, both in England and in the more desperate case of Ireland, was to serve as an argument for change of policy in industry.

Britain was proud of her traditional agricultural system and the large measure of self-sufficiency it had been wont to yield. If the essence of the bourgeois industry and commerce which the doctrine of laissez-faire had sought to serve was fluidity and capacity to expand and adapt, agriculture had been solid and substantial, seemingly as fixed and taken-for-

granted as the seasons. Medieval restrictions on the transfer and leasing of land persisted past the middle of the nineteenth century. Massive continuities characterized the ownership of the land from generation to generation. Although if the land had been equally divided, each person would have owned 1.4 acres, actually in 1881 more than one-fifth of the land was held by 600 noblemen; and if holdings of less than one acre be excluded—

$\frac{1}{4}$  of the land was held by 1,200 persons, averaging 16,200 acres each;

$\frac{1}{4}$  was held by 6,200 persons, averaging 3,150 acres;

$\frac{1}{4}$  by 50,770 persons, averaging 380 acres;

$\frac{1}{4}$  by 261,830 persons, averaging 70 acres.\*

In a class-stratified social system, it is the minority of wielders of large power who set the pattern of the system; and so, with half the agricultural land held by 7,400 persons under a rigid family system and prioritive legal restraints on the transfer of land, it is not surprising that the land of Britain was a symbol of permanent substantiality not even second to the Crown itself.

And yet, as the nineteenth century wore on, the foundations of the agricultural system were changing. England was no longer an agricultural nation living off the land, with the pleasant and exciting addition of a developing industry whose products she could profitably export to other countries. England was an industrial nation, still practicing some agriculture, but dependent for her existence on food which she imported. The 'Union Chargeability Act' of 1865 greatly increased the mobility of workers and weakened the rural village tradition. Capital was increasingly deserting the land for urban industry; and the agricultural depression which began in the late 'seventies ended the domination of the social structure by the landed proprietor and completed the change from a rural to an industrial state, which the application of steam power to machinery had begun.

\* Escott, *England*, p. 192. Cf. discussion of the land problem in Ch. iv, pp. 121-32.

Foreign competition aided by improved overseas transportation, began seriously to undermine grain prices late in the 'seventies.

After 1877 [the price of wheat] never touched 50 s. again; in 1884 it dipped below 40 s.; in 1894 it was at 22 s., and the harvest of that year of panic sold at 19 s. The grazing counties stood the storm best. But the corn counties were stricken, it seemed, beyond recovery. Great wars have been less destructive of wealth than the calamity which stretched from 1879, the wettest, to 1894, the driest, year in memory.<sup>1</sup>

Ocean transportation was speeding up and in 1880 refrigeration began to lessen the bulk and cost of importation of meat. In that year for the first time frozen meat—400 carcasses of sheep—was brought to London from Australia; four years later 500 times that amount—over 200,000 carcasses—was delivered in London.<sup>2</sup> Beef from the great herds of the American plains began to compete with English stock. In 1884-6 the United Kingdom imported more than four and a half times as much beef as it had in 1872-9, and the threat of imported meat to English grazers may be glimpsed in the fact that the more than 1,500 slaughter houses in London in 1873 were to fall to less than half that number by 1888.<sup>3</sup>

In the mid 'eighties Mr. Algernon West, Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, testified before the Royal Commission on Trade Depression:

Comparing 1884 with 1879-80, the net assessments of landed property show a decline of 5,000,000 pounds and capitalizing that sum at thirty years' purchase, we have a total depreciation in the capital value of land of 150,000,000 pounds.<sup>4</sup>

An enormous number of farms were given up in panic, and between 1880 and 1886 rents were reduced from 25 to as much as 80 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

That this was more than a depression phenomenon is shown by the fact that in 1894 the estimated capital value of agricultural land in the United Kingdom was just half of what it was in 1875, having declined from 2,000 to 1,000 million pounds.

If falling prices, declining capitalization of land, and the flight of capital to industry constituted the bolder public aspects of Britain's 'agricultural problems,' there was also the less dramatic but humanly insistent plight of the upwards of half a million tenant farmers who actually tilled the soil. These men, although in some parts of England still employed by the year, in other parts were tending to fall into the ranks of seasonal or casual labor, employed by the day or even by the hour.<sup>9</sup>

Urban industry was wiping out rural handicrafts, and at the same time declining profits in agriculture permitted the hiring of fewer laborers by farmers.<sup>10</sup> English farming had been the best in the world because, as the saying went, with wheat at fifty shillings it only began to pay after a crop of twenty-eight bushels to the acre had been got.

But with prices being hammered down by foreign competition, the farmer's chance to hold his own depended upon his achievement of yet further reaches of efficiency. Scientific drainage and manuring were becoming common practice, and after the 'fifties steam threshing had begun to displace primitive hand methods. But the road to further efficiency lay through extension of the use of machinery and larger acreage. The farms, of an average size of only 56 acres, operated by the 561,000 tenant farmers of Great Britain were not efficient economic units for the new agriculture. The Reports of the Royal Commission on Agricultural Depression, issued between 1894 and 1897,<sup>11</sup> present an almost unbroken record of the plight of the farmer, and they question whether he could save himself by adopting more of the methods of industrial capitalism.

People who, in general, stoutly opposed changes in the 'English system' of economic liberalism saw fit to urge an exception here.\* For laissez-faire had been an outgrowth of urban industry. It was less applicable and less profitable in agriculture. Furthermore, the plight of English yeomen evoked a sentiment that did not readily extend to the 'factory hand.'

\* See Ch. IV, pp. 126-32.

The slow and muted strangulation of rural England, from which it was never fully to recover, stood in marked contrast to the turbulent expansion of commercial and industrial England after the middle of the century. The nation was cashing in on a world scale on its priority in the field of technology; personal livelihood was becoming large-scale, impersonal profit-taking; business was hardening into finance capitalism; England was unwittingly passing through a later Indian Summer with its false optimism that was to usher in the rigors of a chaotic international competition fostered in part by her own exports of capital.

London was the symbol of this expanding urban world and, as time went on, more and more its financial nerve center. Greater London grew by 45 per cent between 1851 and 1871 and a further 23 per cent by 1881.<sup>12</sup> In the decade of the 'eighties the rate of growth of the nineteen other largest cities was to exceed that of greater London; <sup>13</sup> at this period approximately two-thirds of the people of England were townspeople, by the end of the decade most people in Britain were within earshot of a town, and towns had become the birthplace of the majority of the British people.<sup>14</sup> While the share of England's gainfully occupied engaged in agriculture was roughly halved between 1851 and 1881, the percentages in factory trades and commerce doubled. In 1881, 12 per cent of the working population of England and Wales was engaged in agriculture; more than half, 57 per cent, in industry (factory trades); nearly a tenth, 9 per cent, in commerce; 6 per cent in professions; and 16 per cent in domestic service.<sup>15</sup> A decade later the percentage of the working population of England and Wales engaged in industry remained the same; those engaged in agriculture dropped to 10 per cent and those in domestic service to 15 per cent, while those in commerce rose to 11 per cent and those in the professions to 7 per cent.<sup>16</sup>

Urbanization meant a decline in localism and an increased flow of common public opinion. People got about more. They had more occasions for encountering ideas different from their own.



The number of passengers carried by all railroads in the United Kingdom nearly doubled between 1870 and 1880, increasing from 336,545 in the former year to 603,885 in the latter; by 1890 the total had reached 817,744.\* Greater comfort in travel and decline in fares increased the facility with which people moved from place to place, and the sharp distinction between 'the season' and 'out of season' in London began to decline.<sup>17</sup> Escott, writing in 1885, says that:

The entire length of Great Britain may now be traversed for a few pence under three pounds sterling. The price of a single third-class ticket from London to John o'Groat's—from King's Cross to Wick or Thurso Station—is two pounds nineteen shillings and fourpence. The distance is as nearly as possible six hundred and fifty miles. The time spent upon the journey will be something less than twenty-five hours, and the journey itself will be accomplished, whatever class the traveler may choose, with comparatively slight fatigue.<sup>18</sup>

Three years later the *Annual Register* noted with pride that the journey from London to Edinburgh had been reduced to eight hours, making the time for running the 150 miles between Euston and Crewe three hours and five minutes.<sup>19</sup>

Within cities, also, transportation was becoming easier. In 1882 there were 135 tramways in the United Kingdom, covering 564 miles. Travel by sea was gaining in speed and ease. On 7 August 1885, 'The Cunard Line Steamer Etruria reached Crockhaven, having made the passage from New York in six days six hours—the fastest on record.'<sup>20</sup>

Other forms of communication were increasing.† The

\* Summary of Report of the Board of Trade, *Annual Register*, n.s., 1883, 'Chronicle of Events,' 28 August, pp. 37-8. In number of miles of lines and in paid-up capital there was a steady advance each year from 1871 through 1890, even through the late 'seventies and middle 'eighties, although considerably less in the depression years.

† The *Fourth Annual Report* of the Coffee Taverns Company reported 23 taverns in London, frequented by 14,000 to 15,000 customers daily, while the number in Liverpool, Manchester, and other parts of the country was steadily growing. (*Annual Register*, n.s., 1880, 'Chronicle of Events,' 25 February, p. 17.)

number of millions of letters carried per inhabitant increased from 24 in 1861-70, to 30 in 1871-80, and 37 in 1881-5.<sup>21</sup> Despite the decrease in postal fees from a penny to a half-penny in 1880, the postal-services revenue of the United Kingdom increased by more than 50 per cent between 1879-80 and 1889-90, from £6,350,000 in the former year to £9,540,000 in the latter.\*

In 1880 there appeared the first electric street lighting, and until the dark ages of the nineteen-forties people could go about London without heading Gay's admonition:

Let constant vigilance thy footsteps guide,  
And wary circumspection guard thy side;  
Thou shalt then walk unharmed the dang'rous night,  
Nor need th' official link-boy's smoky light.

When William Murdock at the beginning of the nineteenth century had proposed to light the streets of London with gas his project was condemned on the moral grounds that 'The fear of darkness would vanish and crime would increase since thieves would be emboldened,' and 'Since God had divided the light from the darkness, it is blasphemous to try to turn night into day by lighting the streets.' The medical profession lent its support to the opposition by urging that 'the emanations of the night are injurious to health and people would be encouraged by lighted streets to stay out in the night air.'† But in 1881 it was the gas companies who began to show alarm about the lighting of London. In the following year electric bulbs were invented for household use.

Wealth was piling up in England. The number of persons per 10,000 of population assessed by the income tax as receiving more than £200 yearly had stood at 23 in 1850, 30 in 1860, 4½ in 1870, and rose to 63 in 1880 and to 70 in

\* William Page, *Commerce and Industry*, London, Constable, 1919, Vol. II. Table 7, p. 37. Cf. Ch. IX, pp. 367-70, for effects of increased literacy and cheap printing on communication.

† *Printers Ink*, 8 June 1933. The eight-hour day, higher wages, and public education were later opposed on grounds similar in principle.

1886.<sup>22</sup> Miriam Beard estimates that by the 'eighties England contained no less than 200 fortunes of a million dollars and more, double the number in each of the two countries next in rank, Germany and the United States.<sup>23</sup>

In England, as in the rest of the world during the third quarter of the century, the expansion in output of all kinds of commodities far outran that of any previous period in history.<sup>24</sup> This was the outcome of the combination of food products and raw materials from the new world, expansion of world markets, great advances in the arts of production, the opening up of new sources of iron and coal in Germany and the United States, and new manufactures stimulated by both countries.

In England itself the annual output per occupied person, including the temporarily unemployed, rose steadily even through the depression years. On the basis of 1913 prices it was as follows: <sup>25</sup>

<i>Years</i>	<i>Sterling</i>
1860-69 . . . . .	66.9
1870-76 . . . . .	68.3
1877-85 . . . . .	81.5
1886-93 . . . . .	89.0
1894-1903 . . . . .	101.2
1913 . . . . .	112.5

This increase in productive capacity within England was accompanied, and at first fostered, then threatened, by a great increase in international trade. British exports, measured in undeflated pounds sterling, almost doubled between 1859 and 1872, being £130,412,000 in 1859, as against £256,270,000 in 1872; or taking the growth of the population into account, rising from £4.11s.2d. in 1859 to £8.1s.0d. in 1872.<sup>26</sup> So vast and sure did this onward movement of industry and commerce appear to be that few in England could have glimpsed, in the recession thereafter, the rising—and permanent—challenge of newer industrial nations.

During the second half of the century the proportion of imports to exports had steadily increased. Between 1870 and

1877 imports rose in value by 30 per cent, from £303,257,000 and £9.14s.4d. per head of population in 1870 to £391,120,000 and £11.5s.10d. per head in 1877.<sup>27</sup> While imports fluctuated up and down during the depression the general movement was upward. The value of imports in 1889, again undeflated for the price-level which had been falling since 1873, was 41 per cent above 1870.

By the early 'eighties telegraph cables connecting all parts of the world had made of it a single market, and orders were increasingly placed directly rather than through middlemen, and for definite amounts rather than by the more casual method of consignment. The tempo of trade rivalry was quickening across the entire world.

Robert Harding, chief official receiver in bankruptcy, testified before the Royal Commission on Trade Depression in 1885:

I think that . . . [disasters of producers] arose altogether from an alteration in the mode of doing business. The middleman is being squeezed out. Where [a] house once sold goods during the year, . . . to the amount of 2,000*l.* or 3,000*l.* to numerous other houses in London, the trade has so changed that they do not have accounts of perhaps more than 150*l.* . . . because . . . now . . . a retailer . . . communicates at once with the manufacturer abroad, . . . without the intervention of any house in London, and the houses in London are losing the profits upon that business which they formerly carried on."<sup>28</sup>

Fewer things were left to chance. More planning had become possible and inevitable. This increase of trade and shrinking of market through mechanical invention was largely a product of the years between the early 'sixties and the early 'eighties.

This development and reorganization of commerce was accompanied, during these same early decades of the second half of the century, by export of capital, extensive colonial development, and emigration. In 1885 Sir Robert Giffen, president of the Board of Trade, estimated that the total amount of United Kingdom capital invested abroad was approximately £1,302,000,000.<sup>29</sup> Between 1872 and 1882 the

total amount of British capital invested abroad increased by 46 per cent and in the next 11 years by 94 per cent.<sup>30</sup> In the first half of the century England had loaned capital to other countries but Englishmen had not remained to direct foreign enterprises. Between 1850 and 1870 British capital began to move into countries, such as Russia, Scandinavia, and South America, which had neither the means nor the administration to carry on public works.<sup>31</sup> In the fourth quarter of the century the first fruits of foreign investment had been harvested and the second fruits in trade rivalry began to be apparent.

Before 1870 Britain had been able to profit by natural advantages in coal and iron and by being first to open up world markets. Her own foreign investments helped to raise up competitors against her, and as steel, electricity, and research chemistry replaced coal and iron, she enjoyed no natural advantages, much of her machinery and equipment had become obsolescent, and established procedures were often a handicap. The decline of her share in world trade was inevitable as the industrial and commercial revolutions spread.

Since the budget of 1861, no foreign manufactured articles appeared in the British tariff except flour, alcohol, tobacco, sugar, and a few minor items. This free-trade policy, combined with the growing industrialization of the whole civilized world, meant that British imports were containing an increased proportion of manufactured and partially manufactured goods. At the same time higher tariffs adopted by other countries—by Austria in 1877 and 1879, by Russia in 1877 and 1881, Germany, 1879, France, 1881 and 1882, Italy, 1882—accentuated the special character of British procedure. The French tariff was passed in May 1881 and by October the Fair Trade League had come into existence in England in response to it. The United States had come out of the Civil War with a high tariff, and by the 'eighties had built up a tariff wall such as Europe had never known.

'The so-called 'unfavorable balance of trade,' in the excess of imports over exports had created a mounting uneasiness.

Competition in foreign trade, especially with Germany and America, brought, almost suddenly, acute fear.\* Such comments as the following are typical:

Even the vast accumulations of English wealth cannot stand for an indefinite time the tremendous drafts represented by adverse trade balances of hundreds of millions sterling . . . with our growing tastes for luxuries as a people, and the enormous additions to our national expenditure in consequence, we have come to occupy a position in which we are no longer progressing, but . . . even falling back. And at this precise time . . . we find other nations able to compete with us to an extent such as we have never before experienced.<sup>32</sup>

The Report of the Commission on the Depression in 1885-6 painted the picture in sober colors:

In neutral markets . . . we are beginning to feel the effects of foreign competition in quarters where our trade formerly enjoyed a practical monopoly. . . . In every quarter of the world the perseverance and enterprise of the Germans are making themselves felt. In the actual production of commodities we have now few, if any, advantages over them; and in a knowledge of the markets of the world, . . . a determination to obtain a footing wherever they can, and a tenacity in maintaining it, they appear to be gaining ground on us. . . . If our position is to be maintained it must be by the . . . same energy, perseverance, self-restraint, and readiness of resource by which it was originally created.<sup>33</sup>

Each separate protest was significant, not so much in terms of a particular issue, as in reflecting the mounting fear that England was at a hopeless disadvantage in relation to foreign competitors.

Between 1860 and 1880 England's colonial possessions increased from 2.5 million square miles to 7.7 million, and her colonial population from 145 millions to 268 millions of

\* See Benjamin H. Brown, *Growth of the Tariff Reform Movement in Britain, 1881-1895*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1942, for an analysis of the quick rise of the protective movement in England in response to this fear.

people. The empire was rapidly becoming more than a 'vast system of outdoor relief for the upper classes,' as Mill had called it. By 1900 it had reached nearly 13 million square miles and 370 million people. The ideas of Sir G. C. Lewis, Cairnes, and Bismarck that colonies were a handicap to a European nation to be liquidated as rapidly as possible were being displaced by actual use of colonies as sources of raw materials, markets, income, and outlets for emigration.\* Seeley's *Expansion of England*, published in 1883, served, like the *Wealth of Nations* earlier, not so much to initiate a new trend as to focus in public attention a movement long gathering power. The developments of the 'sixties, 'seventies, and 'eighties meant that Great Britain had at her disposal the material resources of a great colonial empire, and that in contemporary opinion this fact was regarded, not as a liability, but as a great asset for the future.

The opening of the Suez Canal, the use of the Bessemer process in steel, the discovery of means of combating tropical disease, all occurring about 1870, helped to open up a new era in colonial development. At the same time that responsible government was being established in Canada and Australia, the 'Empire in partnership,' precedents were being laid down for the development of Africa and India, the 'Empire in trust.'

Clapham believes that the beginning of the 'seventies marked the high point of undisputed British supremacy in the old commerce and the new industry.<sup>34</sup> The industrial revolution was moving into a climactic stage in which the inner logic of technology under capitalism was to shape not only the lives of individuals but of whole nations; and the desultory commercial warfare of earlier times was changing into the fierce, sustained international chaos of industrial imperialism.

The beginning of the 'seventies, likewise, in Clapham's view, witnessed the culmination of two other crucial and

\* See Ch. IV, pp. 122-3, for discussion of India in relation to the depression.

characteristic aspects of the earlier economy: it was the high point of the age of steam and also of the era of non-joint-stock industrial organization.

By 1871 the steam engine was so far supreme in industry that primitive water-power applied directly to turning machinery supplied only 5 per cent of all the mechanical power which came under the view of the government factory inspectors.<sup>35</sup> Gas engines were a negligible factor, and electrical power was unknown. By the 'eighties a new age of mechanical power was in being.

Industry was speeding up. In textiles the spinning mule was first put into active use in 1870, and other efficiencies, such as the increase in the number and speed of spindles in the mule, followed. Even in those industries which had felt the chief impact of new inventions in the early days of the industrial revolution, inventions in the second half of the nineteenth century were continuing to alter the processes of production.<sup>36</sup> The effects of these new processes were quickly felt. In 1853 Great Britain made half the pig iron of the world. But in the next thirty years this output was almost trebled. The year 1869 marked the expiration of the master-patents of Henry Bessemer, whose new process in making steel 'takes first rank with the great events which have changed the face of society.'<sup>37</sup> In 1877 the process was further perfected by the elimination of phosphorus in the Bessemer converter, and the substitution of steel for iron was enormously furthered.<sup>38</sup> The spread of the Bessemer processes coincided with the importation of Spanish ore and the use of more precise methods in the production of iron and steel. In 1872 the Northwestern Railroad used steel rails only at crossings; by 1877 it had stopped giving orders for iron rails. The decade 1878-87 marked the transition from iron to steel in shipbuilding.<sup>39</sup> By 1885 marine boilers were scarcely ever built of iron. The new metal-built ships of the 'eighties would not have been possible except for the new exact methods of handling steel.<sup>40</sup>

The new discoveries meant a shift in British industry



toward the so-called 'heavy industries.' \* Increase in British production as a result of the new processes is clear. The effect of the new developments on Britain's relative position in world trade is, as noted above, less clear. Macrosty believes that the rapid spread of the use of steel tended to counterbalance the decreased output of ships during the depression years.<sup>11</sup> Many industrialists, on the other hand, believed that it operated to make Britain's position more unfavorable. For example, Mr. William A. Donaldson, an iron merchant of Glasgow, testified before the Royal Commission on the Depression, in 1886, that the Bessemer process for the production of steel had reduced the volume of export trade by 25 per cent in the four preceding years and its value more than 25 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

New exact methods in industry did not immediately impose marked demands for increase in size of plants; the size of individual industrial units increased but slowly in the 'seventies.† During the 'eighties growth was more rapid, so that by the time of the Labour Commission of the early 'nineties, there was a definite feeling that larger and more impersonal plants were replacing small, familiar industrial units. Mr. Alexander Low, a shipwright, chairman of the Associated Shipwrights of the Clyde district, recounted the changes he had seen:

My old apprentice master . . . took a delight in . . . coming in touch with his men and his apprentices. He took us up to his own house, and educated us, gave us the means of attending to drafting and mathematics, . . . I think the cause of our present disputes is that the masters are not so well in touch with the *employés* as they were when I was an apprentice.

\* See, for example, the testimony of Mr. Charles Belf, Master Cutler of Sheffield: 'Within the last 20 or 25 years there has been an enormous increase in Sheffield in the heavier branches of trade, the heavier iron and steel trade, and the products thereof.' Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Depression of Trade and Industry, 20 January 1886, *Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*, Part 1, *Second Report*, Vol. XXI, p. 77.

† Clapham estimates that in most industries the size of unit did not increase more than 5 to 10 oz. at the outside, 20 per cent between 1870 and the mid 'eighties. J. H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, Cambridge University Press, 1932, Vol. II, pp. 114-17.

*Ques.* About how many persons were employed in the yard in which you were apprenticed? *Ans.* There would be between 60 and 70.

*Ques.* And what number are employed now in one of the great Clyde yards? *Ans.* About 1,500, the same yard . . . it was entirely timber when I served my time. It was before iron was introduced at all. I look back to about 1846.\*

But if the size of individual industrial plants increased slowly, consolidations of small units into some form of monopoly blocs proceeded rapidly, especially in heavy industries such as iron and steel. Levy believes that even in the heavy industries the various industrial and financial combinations of the early and mid 'eighties were not of precisely the same sort as the cartels and syndicates of the twentieth century. One reason for their special character was that coal, for example, lay in scattered deposits in England, fostering mutual competition, whereas in Germany coal deposits were more concentrated.<sup>43</sup>

Macrosty distinguishes three main types of combinations taking place in British industry at this time: integration or vertical combination, as in the iron and steel industry; amalgamation or horizontal combination, as in the textile industries; and terminal associations, as in the retail trades.<sup>44</sup> Although the movement toward industrial integration was clearly enough perceived in the 'eighties, its importance was not always recognized. Alfred Marshall, for example, regarded it as a phenomenon of only temporary significance.<sup>45</sup>

Along with the growth of consolidations throughout industry, employers' associations for joint action became more open and recognized, and more aggressive. Such organization for joint action is endemic in capitalism, but its scope and energy depend upon threats to business from competition, labor, government, or other sources. Adam Smith referred

\* Testimony before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 19 May 1892, *Minutes of Evidence, Third Report*, Vol. xxxii, 1893, p. 101.

Escott declared, 'The business is at the present moment in the hands of large employers . . . Factory legislation has killed the small manufacturers. (*England*, p. 151.)

to 'tacit but constant and uniform combinations' of masters not to raise wages<sup>46</sup> and also to the propensity of business men whenever they met even for social purposes to conspire against the consuming public.<sup>47</sup> All through the nineteenth century, even during the period when the law forbade combinations of employers as well as workmen, employers' associations existed without legal status and without penalty.<sup>48</sup>

In view of this non-official status of employers' associations summary generalization is difficult; but it appears that they were least active during the prosperous third quarter of the century. In the fourth quarter, when prosperity could be less taken for granted and labor was again less quiescent, employers' associations for wage-fixing and price-fixing were open and vigorous.\* Associations of masters in the older trades, printing, building, bakers, and brewers were no longer 'tacit,' but engaged actively in price-fixing, and their existence was taken for granted in the labor discussions of the 'eighties.

Employers' associations in iron and coal and other heavy industries varied in activity from exercising a loose supervision over the industry and conducting parliamentary negotiations to systematic attempts to control production, wages, and prices.<sup>49</sup> Some organizations, for example the Traders' Defence Association of Scotland, were combinations of 'wholesale and retail merchants in every trade' and manufacturers 'to fight co-operative and civil service stores' through public pamphlets, public lectures, and in Parliament. Reference to organizations of employers multiply in successive Royal Commission Reports from the early 'eighties to the end of the century. The case of the organization of railway owners is typical of the growing trend.

Mr. I. T. Smith, director and general manager of the Barrow Hematite Steel Company, gave before the Royal Commission on the Depression the following account of the organization of the 'Railway Ring' at a time when in popular opinion 'free competition' prevailed; and his statement re-

\* See Ch. vii. Cf. Clapham, *op. cit.* pp. 145-7.

veals the further now-familiar tendency for such monopoly agreements to reach across national boundaries and become international:

[The association of manufacturers of steel rails] was formed [in 1883] at which time steel rails were being sold at less than £1 per ton at the works, that price . . . being a loss to the parties selling them varying from 5s. to 10s. a ton . . . we were all of us working nothing like half time, and when orders came in it became a question, Is it better to take these orders at a known loss or let the works stand and have an indirect loss in that way? . . . After some time the makers in England, all except one firm, agreed to join the association, and it was decided to endeavour to associate the Belgians and the Germans with us as being the only two countries that exported rails. It ended . . . that Great Britain kept 66 per cent. of the entire export trade, Belgium had 7 per cent. and Germany 27 per cent. . . . The next thing that we had to do, having agreed upon what proportion each country was to have of the orders of the world, was to agree amongst ourselves how we should divide those orders. . . . we have gone on for two years dividing the orders in something like a proper proportion and we have maintained a price of £1.13s. a ton at the works, it having been when we began £1 . . .

*Ques.* What would be the position of a man opening a new firm?

*Ans.* The position of a man opening a new firm would be, that if he would not join the union we should have to put our price to the point that would prevent other people coming into it. The point to which we regulate our price is to minimise competition as much as we can . . .

*Ques.* Have the prices since you established the association been such as were calculated to ensure an inordinate profit, or such as were calculated rather to ensure against loss by undue competition? *Ans.* The prices were fixed at very much what we considered the cost price would be at the least favoured works, and any amount of profit upon the prices we fixed is due to the better position and better plant of the various works.<sup>100</sup>

Sir Lowthian Bell, president of the Iron Trade Association of Great Britain, said of the Railway Ring:

*Ques.* I should be very glad to have your opinion as to whether you think it is for the true interests of this country that such an

arrangement as that railway ring should continue . . . ? *Ans.* In a large sense I do not think it is, at the same time if the powers of production are too large, it is a question whether the evil may not be mitigated by such an arrangement as that in question provided always that encouragement is not held out to others to make further additions to the means of production.<sup>51</sup>

The Final Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in 1894 summarized the status of employers' associations in heavy industries:

The British Iron Trade Association [having by 1894 branches 'in most engineering centers throughout the Kingdom'] was . . . established in 1876 and the Tin Plate Makers' Association in 1889 . . . the Iron Trades Employers' Association was said to have been in existence for a period of twenty years. This Association includes about 140 establishments, which together employ from 70,000 to 80,000 workmen. The Ironmasters' Associations in Cleveland, West Cumberland and South Staffordshire include 17, 12 and 44 establishments respectively. The annual production of pig-iron at the associated works at Cleveland is about 2,500,000 tons and at the non-associated works about 300,000 tons. The number of work-people employed by these associations is about 3,500 in Cleveland, and 2,500 in West Cumberland. The South Staffordshire Ironmasters' Association was said to have been in continuous existence for at least a century.<sup>52</sup>

The tendency to consolidation of small competing units into large blocs accompanied the growth of corporate organization. Few social institutions have had so momentous and, to the generation that originated them, such unexpected results as the rise of corporately organized business. When this new form of association was legalized in 1862 by the Joint Stock Companies Act, nobody foresaw the Pandora's Box which industrial society was opening. It was not suspected that corporate business would rapidly become the overwhelming form of modern enterprise; nor were the implications of this substitution of 'candid covetousness' for personal livelihood, of impersonal control for personal responsibility, of 'by-laws for men,' foreseen. No institution has done more than this 'stock-and-bond-capitalism' to 'turn

endeavor for a livelihood into quest of the largest return on capital.' <sup>53</sup> It created a new group, a *rentier* class, who could live upon financial returns from enterprises in which they took no active part. Here was a fluid social invention, as convenient as money, that was to change society and strain the old economic beliefs in competition, the old political beliefs in democracy, and the old moral beliefs in personal responsibility past any margins of tolerance which earlier generations had set for them.

The innocent-looking Joint Stock Companies Act of 1862 authorized any seven or more associates, provided their object was lawful, to constitute themselves a company, with either limited or unlimited liability, by subscribing a memorandum of association. Two groups of persons sponsored the Act of 1862, those who wanted to curb the growth of illegal companies and those who thought it desirable for groups of people to be able to engage in business without risking the personal fortunes of each of their members. As to the first of these purposes, Geoffrey Todd concludes that up to 1867 many speculative, fraudulent, or abortive companies were organized even under the new act, but that the decade 1867-77 marked a transition in which the beneficial restraints of the act began to appear, 'commercial morality' grew, fraud and reckless speculation declined, and there was more emphasis on the earning power of the new companies.<sup>54</sup> That the Joint Stock Companies Act did not usher in a permanent trend to more 'commercial morality,' however, may be seen from the call by *The Economist* in 1890 for changes in the law: 'That the question is ripe for treatment is only too obvious to anybody who pays the slightest attention to the company-promoting frauds which are constantly being perpetrated under cover of the existing Acts.' <sup>55</sup>

W. S. Gilbert caught up the skepticism of the time in his 'Limited Liability':

Some seven men form an Association  
(If possible, all Peers and Baronets),  
They start off with a public declaration

To what extent they mean to pay their debts.  
That's called their Capital . . .

They then proceed to trade with all who'll trust 'em  
Quite irrespective of their capital  
(It's shady, but it's sanctified by custom);  
Bank, Railway, Loan, or Panama Canal . . .

If you succeed, your profits are stupendous  
And if you fail, pop goes your eighteen pence.

The shift to corporate form began slowly. Through the 'seventies and early 'eighties such joint stock companies as were formed were mainly conversions of existing private firms, rather than new creations. But some of the firms consolidated under the Joint Stock Companies Act represented the largest and most influential industries in the country. After the mid 'eighties the number of joint stock companies rose steadily, and Page describes the growth of the limited-liability joint stock company as the main tendency in the commercial life of the time. Between April 1884 and April 1890 the number of joint stock companies carrying on business and the amount of their paid-up capital increased by two-thirds, from 8,692 to 13,323 companies, and from £475,551,000 to £775,140,000 of paid-up capital.<sup>56</sup> The steel firm of John Brown and Company in Sheffield, soon after acquiring the Bessemer patent and being converted into a limited liability company, became the largest makers of steel rails in the country, as well as engaging in manufacturing of armor plates and in shipbuilding. The Salt Union, incorporated as a limited liability company in 1888 combined 64 firms, and attempted to combat the conditions of competition, under which, in 1887, salt had at times been sold at 50 per cent below cost.<sup>57</sup> The Union had in 1888 a capital of three millions, and had as its object the purchase of all salt mines and works in the United Kingdom.<sup>58</sup> By November 1888 the price of common salt had risen from 2s. 6d. per ton to 9s. Various railway associations culminated in the Railway Association of 1889, and in the next decade the organiza-

tion movement extended to textiles with the cotton thread syndicate of 1896.<sup>50</sup>

The movements of industrial consolidation and of corporate organization at home and of the export of capital abroad were paralleled and stimulated by the increasing centralization of finance during the 'seventies and 'eighties. At a time when the financial structures of Germany, France, and the United States were still focused upon the development of local and domestic industry, that of England was adapted to the needs of world-wide commerce. The provincial banker, with his personalized service to local industries, waned in influence as the London money market sucked up the free capital of the entire country.<sup>60</sup> Few banks took advantage of the Limited Liability Act of 1862 immediately following its enactment, but the calamitous failure of the City of Glasgow Bank in 1878, when there were calls for £2,750 on the £100 share, precipitated a movement of organization under the new law.\* By the middle of the 'eighties private banking was becoming almost extinct in England. In its semi-annual summary of the Metropolitan Joint Stock Banks for the closing half of 1884, *The Economist* noted that 'Of the amounts quoted by Lloyds', Barnett's and Bosanquet's Bank, perhaps we shall not be far wrong in assuming that about one-third may be taken as the proportion belonging to the private firms whose business they have absorbed.' †

\* Charles Ryle Fay, *Great Britain from Adam Smith to the Present Day*, London, Longmans, Green, 1928, pp. 112-13. Cf. Bagehot's statement: 'I have tediously insisted that the natural system of banking is that of many banks keeping their own cash reserve, with the penalty of failure before them if they neglect it. I have shown that our system is that of a single bank keeping the whole reserve under no effectual penalty of failure. And yet I propose to retain that system and only attempt to mend and palliate it . . . A system of credit which has slowly grown up as years went on, which has suited it self to the course of business . . . will not be altered because theorists disapprove of it, or because books are written against it.' (Walter Bagehot, *Lombard Street: A Description of the Money Market*, London, Smith, Elder, 1915, reprinted from ed. of 1870, p. 310.)

† 31 January 1885, Vol. 43, p. 217.

On 17 January 1885, *The Economist* stated editorially: 'Private banking in this country has long been undergoing a process of gradual extinction, and



Individual banks were losing any claim to independent status and stability. At the same time 'personal character' ceased to be valid security for loans and overdrafts when the old local bankers, with their individual knowledge of all their clients, were replaced by distant directors whose lack of such knowledge compelled them to confine their loan business within hard and fast rules. A structure of big finance was emerging along with the growth of big business.

In the late 'seventies and 'eighties London was not only taking over banking functions for England, but England was becoming to an increasing extent banker for Europe. Operating in an over-built industrial structure where competition was tightening and profits were becoming more difficult, it was almost inevitable that, as extension of credit became more important, banks were no longer allowed to assume financial control in the easy, laissez-faire manner which had prevailed from the 'thirties to the 'seventies, but were made subject to state regulation.

Until the fourth quarter of the century these changes in the structure and scope of the economy had been accompanied by the great growth of wealth which we have noted. Capital had accumulated rapidly, for the lavish expenditure characteristic of the later part of the century was not yet general among the upper-middle class.\* Profits had increased markedly during the 'fifties and 'sixties as there was a rush of investments to newly formed companies. Britain at this time was to such a large extent the owner of capital-goods which the rest of the world lacked that she could for a time

its decline can hardly fail to be accelerated by the step which has now been taken by Messrs. Glyn, Mills, Currie, and Co. . . ., who have decided to register themselves as a joint-stock company.' (Vol. 43, p. 63)

\* Alfred Marshall described the middle-class sobriety of 'a large number, perhaps nearly half, of the older captains of industry' even as late as 1850. 'Such men,' he continues, 'sometimes indulged in bouts of gross indulgence: but they did not care for, and did not even know how to manage, those forms of elegant display, which in later years were to consume a large part of the national income.' (*Industry and Trade*, London, Macmillan, 1920, p. 87.)

make these goods yield not just fine-cut competitive profits but the equivalent of rents; and with these rents she could build more mills and factories. From the standpoint of economic theory she was the world's great quasi-renter.<sup>61</sup>

But from the mid 'seventies on, profits were less consistent and obtained with greater difficulties until the spectacular burst of earnings following the new imperialism at the close of the century. England had entered on a period characterized, according to the Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Depression in 1886, by 'absence of profit or its meagreness, supply of commodities outstripping demand, protectionist policies in other countries, decay in agrarian purchasing power, falling away of the demand for railway materials, falling prices.' \*

W. W. Rostow finds in the shift in the direction of long-term investments from foreign toward home (including Empire) channels the central characteristic of the period.<sup>62</sup> This phase of British economic history might, he says, be entitled 'What Happened when the Railroads were Built.' Railroad building continued but not on a scale sufficient to dominate the capital market and capital-goods industries. Savings inevitably moved into other channels less profitable to the investor. Hence there was a widening gap between bank and money-market rates, and a fall in rate of interest and in prices. There was at the same time an over-development of fixed resources in every large industry, and great advances in machinery, methods, and supply of raw materials: a given amount could be more cheaply produced. Despite rising output, investment was less profitable and competition in profit-making per unit of sale more severe.

Witnesses before the Royal Commission on the Depression were unanimous in testifying to the falling rate of profit in the individual enterprise, and some regarded it as a long-term trend that was emerging rather than as a depression phenomenon:

\* Royal Commission on Depression, 21 December 1886, *Third Report*, Vol. xxiii, p. vii. Cf. Ch. IV, pp. 113-24, for more detailed discussion of the depression.

*Ques.* What should you say with regard to the rate of profit, is it considered to have declined? *Ans.* Very much so; the rate of profit on all our stable goods has been very small indeed, and in many instances very serious losses have been sustained.\*

. . . *Ans.* I am quite sure that labour is increasing in value, that is to say, we have to pay more for it; and . . . the profits in the iron and steel trade for many years back have really depended upon speculative movements in trade to a large extent, . . . when we . . . get a period of prosperity it is so good that the profits are very large, and then we get a corresponding year of extreme depression when there is no profit at all.†

*Ques.* In what proportion of that expenditure [for manufacture] has the increase shown itself? *Ans.* The increased expenditure is really the result of the falling away of the quantity of work to do. If the manufacturing plant is employed in turning out only three-fourths of what it can turn out, the increased expenditure on its lowered production affects the price.

*Ques.* That is to say, the fixed charges bear a greater proportion than they used to do? *Ans.* Yes, because the trade done is less.

*Ques.* What is the chief of those fixed charges? *Ans.* Keeping up the permanent staff of overseers and managers.

*Ques.* Could you not reduce those as your industry is reduced? *Ans.* No, we could not.

*Ques.* To a given extent could you not do so? *Ans.* No. You could reduce the number of people that you are actually employing at work but your managers and clerks and persons in that character of employment you cannot reduce.‡

As the new wealth flooded in after 1850, it flowed as by long wont unevenly among the people of England. According to Colin Clark, 'Great Britain, at an early date in the nineteenth century, showed a very unequal income distribution, which was preserved up to 1909, . . . It remains [still]

\* Testimony of Mr. Henry Mitchell, a merchant in business at Bradford and a member of the Chamber of Commerce for twenty years, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 28 January 1886, *Minutes of Evidence*, Part I, *Second Report*, Vol. XXI, p. 126.

† Testimony of Mr. I. T. Smith, director and general manager of the Barrow Hematite Steel Company, Cumberland, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 17 December 1885, *ibid.* p. 65.

‡ Testimony of James B. Brown before the Royal Commission on Depression, 11 February 1886, *ibid.* p. 164.

one of the most unequal distributions to be found anywhere in the world' <sup>63</sup> 'In the early years of the nineteenth century . . . the population of the British Isles was living at what we now call an Asiatic standard of living;' <sup>64</sup> and during the years 1830-50 wages were in general almost stationary.<sup>65</sup> But during the third quarter of the century the level of real wages rose steeply, and although in most trades there was a fall, in some a sharp fall, between 1874 and 1886, the rise was continued thereafter; and the last quarter of the century must be regarded as, in general, a time of rising real wages.<sup>66</sup>

Wood, in his estimate of trends in real wages and standard of comfort, takes into account variations in money wages, amount of employment, and price of commodities including rent. On this basis, he finds that the position of British working men, i.e. largely *skilled* workers for whom data are available, changed as follows: †

## CHANGES IN REAL WAGES

1850-1890

1850 = 100

	<i>Real Wages Full Work</i>	<i>Real Wages Allowing for Unemployment</i>	<i>Real Wages for Workmen of Unchanged Grade</i>
1850 . . . . .	100	96	100
1870 . . . . .	118	113	109
1875 . . . . .	135	132	123
1877 . . . . .	133	127	120
1880 . . . . .	134	127	120
1882 . . . . .	135	132	121
1884 . . . . .	141	132	127
1886 . . . . .	151	136	132
1887 . . . . .	155	143	136
1890 . . . . .	166	162	144

\* George H. Wood, 'Real Wages and the Standard of Comfort Since 1850,' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, March 1909, Vol. LXXXII, pp. 91-103; cf. Clapham, *op. cit.* p. 350. See Ch. VII, pp. 241, 261-5, for discussion of basis of determining wages and of the sliding wage scale.

† Wood, *op. cit.* "These figures refer, for the most part, to those classes of workers whose wages change most readily, and leave out large classes of persons whose wages are fairly stationary." (Sir Walter Layton and Geoffrey

While this wage rise represents a steady occupational shift from worse- to better-paid jobs,\* and also the results to workers of the increased output per man-hour with more mechanization, a factor of even greater importance was the falling price level after 1873. In fact, any rise in real wages between 1874 and 1896 was more a matter of falling prices than of rise in money wages, in contrast to the preceding period when money wages rose rapidly.

Prices fell 40 per cent in less than three decades between 1874 and 1896. Taking 1891-1900, as 100, Sauerbeck's index of wholesale prices shows fluctuations from 145 in 1851-60 to 151 in 1861-70, 144 in 1871-80, 113 in 1881-90, and, after a further drop in the 'nineties, 110 in 1901-10.<sup>66</sup>

Despite these wage rises after the middle of the century and an accompanying advance in the standard of comfort involving increased consumption of such things as flour, tea, cocoa, sugar, rice, currants, and tobacco, the total flow of wealth to the different segments of the population continued to be very disadvantageous to the working class.

Defenders of wealth were wont to point to the improved

Crowther, *An Introduction to the Study of Prices*, London, Macmillan, 1935, p. 95.)

Kuczynski, on the basis of analysis of wage trends from business cycle to business cycle, believes that real wages, although increasing, formed a decreasing proportion of the national income, and that conclusions regarding better conditions of the workers should be modified by consideration of greater intensity of work, as well as of wage and standard of living trends in other parts of the Empire. (Juergen Kuczynski, *Labour Conditions in Western Europe: 1820 to 1935*, New York, International Publishers, 1937, pp. 68, 69, 80, 81.)

\* Clapham, *op. cit.* p. 451

Rises in wages varied greatly among different occupations. Agricultural workers were relatively ill-paid, but they were a smaller proportion of the whole body of wage-earners in 1886 than in 1850. While the rise in wages of the 'average' wage-earner between 1850 and 1886 was 48 per cent, part of this rise was accomplished by shift of occupation. Trades fairly well paid in 1850, for example, printing and engineering, made gains of only 16 and 25 per cent, respectively. Heavy trades, involving use of coal and iron, show much less rise than the average. The building trades, untouched by machinery, and working a standard shorter day, had increased their standard pay by 50 per cent. (Clapham, *op. cit.* pp. 451-3, after Wood.) Since heavy industry was increasing in proportion to light industry, the increase in real wages was proportionately less.

condition of the workers and even to claim that they were getting 'nearly the whole product of the aggregate industry of the country.' Sir Robert Giffen, in his inaugural address as president of the Royal Statistical Society in 1883, stated that:

. . . while the individual incomes of the working classes have largely increased, the prices of the main articles of their consumption have declined; and the inference of their being much better off . . . is fully supported by statistics showing a decline in the rate of mortality, an increase in consumption of articles in general use, an improvement in general education, a diminution of crime and pauperism, a vast increase in the number of depositors in savings banks . . .

Finally, the increase in the return to capital has not been in any way in proportion, the yield on the same amount of capital being less than it was, and the capital itself . . . more diffused, while the remuneration of labor has enormously increased . . . The competition of capital keeps profits down to the lowest point, and workmen consequently get for themselves nearly the whole product of the aggregate industry of the country. It is interesting . . . to find that the facts correspond with what theory should lead us to anticipate.<sup>67</sup>

Less authoritative analysts were quick to seize upon such conclusions and take the further step of blaming the working class for the unduly large part of the national income they were supposed to have gained. In discussing the 'depression' Escott said:

. . . though England may not resume the scepter of an autocrat of trade, it will be wholly her own fault if she ceases to be one of the large producers of the world. What threatens to wrest the reins from her hands is not so much foreign competition, or the want of reciprocity, as the practice of adulteration and the high price of English labour as compared with foreign. Our work-people must either submit to further reduction in their wages or to longer hours of work, or to a further expenditure of effort which will insure a better quality of work during present hours.<sup>68</sup>

Giffen's conclusions did not go unchallenged even at the time they were first made public. Edward Vansittart Neale

disputed them sharply at the annual meeting of the Association for the Promotion of Social Science in 1884. The figures, he maintained, show that although the rich were not growing richer and the poor poorer, 'the wealth of the richer classes has a decided tendency to increase at a rate higher than its rate of increase among the poorer classes.'<sup>69</sup>

At the Industrial Remuneration Conference held in 1885 Giffen's figures and analyses were both much quoted and sharply challenged. The work of Leoni Levi supported, in general, Giffen's conclusions, though in somewhat guarded fashion. Professor Levi's results were somewhat affected by the fact that he estimated the working-class population at 70 per cent instead of the more usually accepted 75 per cent of the population.<sup>70</sup>

At the same time the Industrial Remuneration Conference brought forth insistent testimony that:

' . . . The chief benefit of the industrial progress of the last century has been reaped—amongst capitalists by the greatest capitalists; amongst employers of labour by the largest employers; in general, by the dealers in commodities (labour included), rather than by makers or producers; and amongst makers and producers, by those engaged in the most skilled rather than the most laborious work. In other words, there is more difference now between the wealth and expenditure of a large manufacturer or mill-owner and a small one than there was a hundred or even fifty years ago; there is more difference now between the owners of one of the colossal clothes-shops of the West-End and the little draper of a country town than there was in the same trade a hundred years ago; . . . From this table [of Robert Giffen comparing different income groups in 1843 and 1880] it appears that small incomes have increased 300 per cent., moderate incomes not quite 240 per cent., large incomes 400 per cent., and very large incomes 800 per cent. The median incomes which in 1843 were nearly 17 per cent. of the whole, have fallen to a little over 13 per cent.'<sup>71</sup>

The scale of living of the approximately three-quarters of the population who were the working class appears in a number of contemporary studies:

Mr. H. M. Hyndman, arguing before the Royal Commission on Labour in favor of a minimum wage of not less than 30s. a week for adults, presented the following figures as a minimum budget for an urban (London) worker's family of father, mother and two children.<sup>72</sup> These figures were not challenged.

		<i>Weekly Budget</i>	
Rent	. . . . .	5s	3d to 7s 6d
Firing	. . . . .	2s	9½d
Light	. . . . .		8½d
Soap, soda, etc.	. . . . .		10d
Bread	. . . . .	1s	8d
Oatmeal	. . . . .		1d
Grocery	. . . . .	2s	6d
Butter, cheese, etc.	. . . . .	2s	
Flour	. . . . .		4d
Meat	. . . . .	3s	
Vegetables and fruit	. . . . .	2s	6d
Clubs, trade unions, sickness and death benefits, etc.	. . . . .	3s	3d
Total	. . . . .	25s	2d

Mr. Hyndman pointed out that this did not include clothing, furniture, or repairs, or anything for recreation.

Mr. Jabez Strong, speaking before the Commission on Labour for ironstone miners in the Cleveland district, maintained that 30s. a week was the very least on which a man could support a family.<sup>73</sup>

Mr. Giffen reported to the same Commission the following distribution as representing 'the actual earnings of adult males engaged in manual labour' in Great Britain and Ireland in 1885:<sup>74</sup>

Under 10s a week	0.2 per cent
10s to 15s	2.5
15s " 20s	20.9
20s " 25s	35.1
25s " 30s	23.6
30s " 35s	11.2
35s " 40s	4.4
Above 40s	1.8



It appears from Mr. Giffen's own figures that 82.6 per cent of these adult male laborers were earning less than the 30s. minimum just referred to.<sup>75</sup>

Charles Booth in his exhaustive study of London covering the years 1887-92, found not a quarter, as Hyndman had alleged, but over 30 per cent of the people of London living in a state of 'poverty.'\* Booth included below the poverty line the 'poor' who had regular family earnings of from 18s. to 21s. a week, and the 'very poor,' who fell below this standard.†

The Fabian Society in its *Figures for Londoners* published in 1892 showed that one in every eight of those then living would die in a workhouse or workhouse infirmary, and one in every sixteen was then a pauper. Over thirty thousand persons had no home but the fourpenny 'doss-house' or the casual ward.<sup>76</sup>

The conditions in no other large city were as well known as those in London as a result of the work of Booth and the Fabians. But Escott noted that poverty pervaded Manchester and Liverpool to a much more conspicuous extent than London.<sup>77</sup> In 1899 Rowntree found that in York 28 per cent of the population and 13 per cent of the wage-earners were living below the poverty line.<sup>78</sup>

Other students of the period were more emphatic than Mr. Giffen in pointing out the consequences of having such large sections of the population living in poverty. In 1884 John Rae, economist and Provost of the University of Edinburgh, republished a series of articles in which he had an-

\* Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, London, Macmillan, 1892, Vol. II, p. 21. Cf. Ch. IV, pp. 144-5, for discussion of the relation between poverty and health and life expectancy.

† Booth, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 33. David Lowe in his life of Kier Hardie recorded that in the 'eighties 'miners earned fifteen shillings a week, and many were in receipt of a half-a-crown per day and getting four days' work weekly. A day's darg was six tons of coal, for which the miner received thirty-pence, and a scale of deductions was in force to keep him from being unjustly purse-proud.' (*From Pit to Parliament*, London, The Labour Publishing Co., 1923, p. 18.)

alyzed socialism from a critical point of view. He stated on the basis of government reports that:

In the wealthiest nation in the world, almost every twentieth inhabitant is a pauper, . . . according to poor-law reports, one-fifth of the community is insufficiently clad; . . . according to medical reports to the Privy Council, the agricultural labourers and large classes of working people in towns are too poorly fed to save them from what are known as starvation diseases; . . . the great proportion of our population lead a life of monotonous and incessant toil, with no prospect in old age but penury and parochial support; . . . one-third, if not indeed one-half, of the families of the country are huddled, six in a room, in a way . . . quite incompatible with the elementary claims of decency, health or morality.\*

The Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes in 1884 and 1885 said of conditions then current that:

A large class of persons whose earnings are at the lowest point are the costermongers and hawkers, whose average appears to be not more than 10s. or 12s. a week . . . The large class of dock labourers follow such an uncertain employment that their average wage is said by some witnesses to be not more than 8s. or 9s. a week, and at the highest is put down as from 12s. to 18s. a week. 5d. an hour is about the rate paid . . . The average of labourers' wages among the residents in Clerkenwell is said to be about 16s. a week, and this of course means that there are many who earn less. This also is about the figure at which labour is said to be obtainable at Bristol.†

A Minority of the Royal Commission on Labour submitted a special Report, claiming that the Majority had failed to make recommendations dealing with the central problem of poverty:

\* John Rac, *Contemporary Socialism*, New York, Scribner's, 1884, pp. 57-8. The book consists of articles reprinted from the *Contemporary* and *Quarterly Reviews*, with some new ones appearing for the first time.

† Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, *Report*, Vol. xxx, 1885, pp. 16-17. Cf. Ch. vii, pp. 277-88, for discussion of the revolt of these lowest-paid workers.

Notwithstanding a great increase in national wealth, whole sections of the population, . . . are unable to obtain a subsistence compatible with health or efficiency . . .

. . . of all who survive to the age of 70, one out of every three is believed to be in receipt of poor relief.

It is impossible to refrain from connecting this deplorable condition of the working class with the fact that two-thirds of the annual product of the community is absorbed by one-fourth of its members, and that the annual tribute of rents, royalties, and dividends levied upon the industry of the nation amounts to nearly five million sterling.<sup>79</sup>

But wage figures, in whatever context they be taken, are only a small part of the facts regarding industrial employment which were forcing themselves on public attention. Accurate comparison is impossible, but there is little doubt that the proportion of employable workers who were unemployed was greater in the 'seventies and 'eighties than in the middle years of the century. It is significant both of the facts in regard to unemployment and of the attitude toward them that the word 'unemployed' used as a noun was first recorded by the Oxford Dictionary in 1882 and 'unemployment' in 1888. Approximately 4 per cent of the working population covered by trade-union figures were unemployed in 1850, a relatively 'good' year.\* In 1886 trade union unemployment, which had stood at between 2 and 3 per cent in 1882 and 1883, and 8 per cent in 1884, rose to over 10 per cent.<sup>80</sup> For heavy industries it was still higher. The Ironfounders had an average of 13.9 per cent, the Associated Blacksmiths 14.4 per cent; the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders 22.2 per cent of their numbers drawing out-of-work

\* Clapham, *op. cit.* p. 453. George Howell, on the basis of his intimate knowledge of a variety of unions, pointed out that during the 'seventies

(1) The Amalgamated Society of Engineers paid to its out-of-work members in the five years 1870-74, £97,096; in 1875-9, £356,749; and in benevolent grants to distressed members in 1870-74, £7,683; 1875-9, £20,982—an increase under the two heads of £272,952 in the five years. (2) Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders: Out-of-work benefit, 1870-74, £8,788; 1875-9, £98,191; increase £89,403. (3) Iron foundries: Out-of-work benefit, 1870-74, £43,152; in 1875-9, £151,936; increase in the five years £108,784. (George Howell, *Labour Legislation, Labour Movements, and Labour Leaders*, London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1902, pp. 392-3.)

pay.\* Actual numbers unemployed were undoubtedly still greater, as not all the unemployed drew out-of-work pay and a greater proportion of non-union members were probably unemployed. These high figures, it will be noted, are all from heavy industries. Estimates including light industries show that unemployment had risen from just over 2 per cent in 1882 to over 10 per cent in 1886.<sup>81</sup> Early in 1886 approximately 6 per cent of the 16,500 cotton spinners who belonged to the Amalgamated Association of Cotton Spinners were unemployed and this number was stated to be much larger than ten years earlier.† In many places conditions were worse than the figures indicated, since many employers preferred putting their men on part time.

Of the 60,000 men on an average employed on the London docks in the mid 'eighties, one-third were out of work and one-third working a four-day week. In 1885 the London and Northwestern Railway put their 6,000 engineering workers on part time.<sup>82</sup>

Popular concern over unemployment reflected not only increase in actual numbers unemployed but the emergence of the idea that having large numbers of the population unable to get work constituted a problem. In November 1884 Lord Dunraven expressed great concern because there were 11,000 men out of work in Sunderland, over 4,000 in Glasgow, 25,000 near the Tyne and Wear with hundreds of families in desperate straits in other sections of the country.<sup>83</sup> In 1885 *The Economist* reported that:

The returns of pauperism for the month of January show week by week an increase in the number of persons in receipt of relief . . . It is clear that the condition of our working classes has

\* Mr. Robert Knight, secretary of the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders Union, reported that in 1883 a full half of the men employed in the industry were out of work the whole time and that the union paid £100,000 in benefits. (Testimony before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 18 May 1892, *Third Report*, Vol. xxxii, 1893, p. 35.)

† James Mawdsley, representing the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire, testimony before the Royal Commission on Depression, 11 February 1886, *Minutes of Evidence*, Part 1, *Second Report*, Vol. xxi, p. 173.

of late been growing worse. And . . . that the distress is no longer, as before, confined almost wholly to the districts where the mineral and shipping industries furnish the stable employment, but, while it continued to be far most marked there, now extends to nearly all districts.<sup>84</sup>

Early in January 1885, several thousand men near starvation presented themselves to the mayor of Birmingham demanding work. From every great town came similar demands, and in London unemployment was much greater as chronic poverty was always greater.

During 1886 and 1887, when with the return of relative prosperity, unemployment continued, Bernstein notes that during his visit to London with Bebel in 1887 they constantly witnessed demonstrations of the unemployed and that unemployment was at the time so great that 'even the best situated Trade Unions had to reckon with the possibility of no longer being able to pay their members unemployment pay.'<sup>85</sup> In 1887 Bosanquet estimated that twenty thousand men were generally out of work in London at some time or other during the winter.<sup>86</sup> The unemployment situation continued acute into the following decade. In 1892 the superintendent of the Chelsea Labour Bureau reported 'a constant want of employment and a large number only casually employed.'

The term 'technological unemployment' was not in use in the 'eighties, but there was recognition that older men were being pushed out by the young and by machines: 'It is a matter of common observation that men past middle age have increasing difficulty in getting employment.'<sup>87</sup> H. M. Hyndman, writing in 1887, said:

Some firms, and these the largest, make it a rule never to employ men over forty . . . if they can possibly help it . . . The pressure of modern competition, the rapidity of modern machinery, are so great that a man must be in the fullest vigour to keep pace with the current.<sup>88</sup>

Mr. Knight reported that the average working life of a member of the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders Union was twenty-three years.<sup>89</sup>

Certain other conditions affecting labor were altering. Some heavy and dangerous jobs had been done away with by such machinery as the sewing-machine, the self-acting mule, and the power-loom shed. At the same time other inventions connected with stoking and blast and steel furnaces were creating new, hard, and hazardous occupations.<sup>90</sup> Hazards in dangerous occupations such as mining and transportation continued, and were somewhat laconically noted. In the mid 'eighties the *Annual Register* reported: 'Dec. 31. The number of colliery explosions for the year was only sixteen; but the loss of life amounted to 322, the largest total since 1880.'<sup>91</sup>

The Minority Report of the Royal Commission on Labour stated:

Except, perhaps, in coal-mining and one or two other trades regulated by special legislation, no systematic attempt has yet been made to utilise the resources of science for the prevention of death or disease in industry. We cannot believe it to be necessary, in the present state of scientific knowledge, that the occupation of a railway worker should be more hazardous than that of a soldier, or, that potters and file-makers should die at three times the rate of clergymen.\*

At the same time contemporary evidence points to speeding up of workers and demands for more effort and production per hour. This was particularly notable in the heavy industries:

There is more stone sent out from the shaft now [in eight hours] than was sent out in 12 hours. That is very strong, but it is so.†

The men are much harder worked and kept under closer surveillance, whilst the preference for young and strong men is very marked, rather than men of mature years, ability and experience, . . . Improved appliances and machinery have led to a

\* Royal Commission on Labour, *Fifth and Final Report*, Part 1, 1891, p. 128. In re death rate of clergymen, etc., see Dr. Ogle's evidence, Table 1, p. 19, of *Digest of Evidence before the Commission as a Whole*.

† Testimony of Mr. Joseph Toyn, president and agent of the Cleveland Miners' Association before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 9 July 1891, *First Report*, Vol. xxxiv, 1892, p. 53.

division of labour that does not give the youth or apprentice an opportunity of learning the trade or making such an experienced or general workman as was the case 20 or 30 years ago.\*

Even as early as 1873 a study by the Local Government Board showed that the last twenty years had brought increased strain in factory work as a result of more machines per worker, greater speed of machines, and of pressure from foremen who received premiums according to amount of work done.<sup>92</sup> That this process was not confined to the heavy industries is shown by evidence from representatives of cotton spinners that the men did much more work in an hour than fifteen or twenty years earlier, due not only to the new machinery but to greater exertion.

Child labor persisted into the last decades of the century. In 1881 the *Annual Register* reported that:

The returns of the inspectors of mines . . . [showed] in the mines of England and Wales there were 426 children between the ages of 10 and 12 years employed . . . In the British mines 4,868 children between 12 and 13 years were employed, . . . and of youths from 13 to 16 years of age, 36,152.<sup>93</sup>

Working hours decreased in the 'seventies as a week of 54 to 54½ hours was won in many representative industries and became as typical of the second half of the nineteenth century as the 63 hour week was of the first. In textiles working hours were somewhat longer, not being below 60 hours a week until 1874, and after that date still remaining 56½ hours. Mechanical invention, by increasing the divisible national income, was a factor in this reduction in hours. The Saturday half-holiday, first introduced in 1850, had become normal procedure by the 'seventies.<sup>94</sup> In some cases, particularly among younger workers in the mines, a 64 hour week was still usual.<sup>95</sup> Such exceptions as well as the possibility of a legal eight-hour day and the abolition of over-

\* Testimony of Mr. J. Swift, general secretary of Steam Engineers' Society, since 1874, before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 15 June 1892, *Third Report*, Vol. xxxii, 1893, p. 206.

time work were much discussed in the Labour Commission of the early 'nineties.

By the last quarter of the century certain underlying movements in economic life had become so firmly established that there could be no reversal of them as long as industrial society retained anything like its present form. These trends were now so strong that they had worked their way to the surface of society where they had to be taken into account in what men did and in what they thought. The structure of economic life closed off certain options in action and in ideas.

The world which Britain had helped to industrialize was catching up with her and her earlier industrial honeymoon was ending. British industrial society would continue to forge ahead, but less and less would this happen automatically; industry, trade, and finance were increasingly requiring joint effort and planning. Already, despite England's theoretical commitment to economic liberalism, actually collective human planning was being used at place after place in society. Employers' associations planning for the domestic and foreign market, joint stock enterprises, factory legislation, trade unions with legal status—all these violations of economic liberalism had, with no clear recognition of their implications, made their appearance by the beginning of the 'eighties.

At the same time, the growth of cities, the increase in internal and international communication and competition, and the impact of poverty and unemployment were throwing into sharper relief the places where human foresight was not being used but where reliance on atomism and automaticity was clearly not enough.



### III. *Environment of Ideas*

ENGLAND in the late nineteenth century was not only the country of Crompton and Arkwright, of Stephenson, of Lowthian Bell, and Bessemer. It was also the England of Ricardo and Malthus, of Coleridge and Wordsworth, of Ruskin, of Carlyle and Dickens, of Darwin, of Mill. Such men as these who had interpreted experience and tradition shaped the ways of thinking and feeling available to England. These ways of thought and feeling, these ideologies, as well as material necessities, formed the inevitable substance out of which changed social philosophies were to be built. Mill's *Liberty* was no less a part of the environment than were the railroads.

In discovering ways of thought the historian is largely dependent upon the articulate minority of the population—the speakers and writers of a period.\* But as we, looking at a period half a century ago, are limited by the selective emphasis of the expressive minority, so, in a not wholly unlike way, were the people of England then.

Language is an inescapable part of the environment. In any situation we see not the material facts of that situation but what the particular vocabulary of our time and our group has taught us to look for.<sup>1</sup> The same human situation may be described in terms of sin and salvation; repression and freedom; cause and effect; calculation and profits; situation and adjustment; desire and fulfilment—according to the particular sequences we are accustomed to look for and the words in which we are accustomed to describe them. These

\* What we can discover of the ways of thinking and feeling of the majority will be taken up in Ch. VII on Labor.

relations are partial statements of reality, or different clues to reality; and the way we state them will lead to different conclusions in regard to what reality is. Selecting certain facts and relationships for emphasis means ignoring or minimizing others; a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing. At the beginning of the 'eighties Englishmen had certain customary ways of seeing available to them, and these closed off others.

The patterns which Englishmen were accustomed to look for in their world at this time were drawn in terms of: (1) what natural science called facts; (2) what the economic market called natural and reasonable ways of behaving; (3)—somewhat less insistently—what Protestant religion called moral.

Other expressions of thought and emotion were not lacking. In this decade Browning, George Eliot, Edward Lear, Arnold, Carlyle, and Charles Reade died. Meredith, Hardy, and Samuel Butler were in the fullness of their power. But the striking fact is that writers whose work was not primarily oriented to natural or to economic science were either writing in a reminiscent or derivative style, or were unknown or ignored, or—if they reached a wider public—were still regarded as peripheral and incidental to the main business of life. Both Tennyson's nostalgia and Browning's bravado were attempts to come to terms with an age in which they felt somewhat alien; neither affected its main preoccupations.

Gerard Manley Hopkins was creating new forms for English poetry in a Jesuit College, but his work was not even published until half a century later. Samuel Butler was defying Darwin and immortalizing the Victorian age, but 'during his life-time he was a literary pariah, the victim of an organized conspiracy of silence.'<sup>2</sup> Matthew Arnold had preached against an inequality which was 'materialising our upper class, vulgarising our middle class, and brutalising our lower,'<sup>3</sup> and particularly against a middle class 'drugged with business' to whom last things had become first and first things last; but although Arnold was the most influential critic of his time in forming academic literary opinion, 'he

spoke essentially to an unheeding generation.' \* Hardy was appreciated for *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and viewed primarily as a rural idyllist long after the tragic scope of his intention as a novelist had been revealed in *The Return of the Native*. Ibsen had written *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Wild Duck*, and *Rosmersholm*, but his plays were unknown or barely tolerated in London.

Rossetti and William Morris, for all their current 'realism,' looked to the Middle Ages for inspiration. Pater significantly called his philosophy the 'New Epicureanism.' 'Aesthetics' was a specialized thing apart, not regarded entirely seriously whether refined by Pater or gently ridiculed by Gilbert. Even the ridicule was not serious satire.

Art and literature were ornaments to be set in a shrine as precious or amusing or mystical, to be brought out for holidays, but nothing that needed to be taken into account by responsible people in shaping their own or their country's life. The artist was a 'purveyor of uplift or a licensed clown.' This was, also, the age of Lewis Carroll. Of him Walter de la Mare writes: 'Every country, indeed every decade of it, flaunts its own little extravagances and aberrations from a reasonable human standard . . . The Victorian age was rich in [such] exotics.' <sup>4</sup>

Englishmen laughed at *Patience*, and the *Hunting of the Snark*; they admired William Morris and Meredith. But it was Morris's *News from Nowhere*, a social document, not the editions of Chaucer at the Kelmscott Press, nor his innovations in color which influenced his time. *Diana of the Crossways*, which ran serially in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1884, and *Beauchamp's Career*, both novels with political tinge, were more widely read than *The Egoist*. The most popular novel of the 'eighties, Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere*, dealt with the attempts of a young clergyman

\* Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship*, New York, Longmans, Green, 1926, p. 379. Cf. Ch. viii, pp. 340-47, for discussion of Arnold, Huxley, Morley, and the rationalist movement.

to come to terms with scientific and economic thought.\* In 1884 the *Annual Register* in its 'Retrospect of Literature' reported:

It would appear as if writings of any importance . . . became more and more confined to science and subjects of technical interest generally. They absorb, apparently, the intellectual vitality of the writing world with very few exceptions; so that . . . if we except memoirs and biographies . . . it is difficult to make a selection of works worthy of mention that belong to the department of literature pure and simple.†

Whether this be regarded as a comment on the quality of literature or on the discrimination of the *Annual Register* it reflects the spirit of the time. Science and the psychology of the market could not be ignored; Protestant morality could not be openly defied.

Furthermore, in the early 'eighties it was not necessary to choose between the views of the practical man of affairs and of the philosopher. Industrialists and financiers who testified before Royal Commissions; political leaders and landowners in Parliament; economists, scientists, and philosophers who wrote for the Reviews; statisticians at the Board of Trade and teachers in the Universities all tended to differ, not so much in what they believed to be 'reality' as in different emphases and ways of elaborating their beliefs.‡ In the course of the nineteenth century common interests had led the landed aristocracy and the upper middle class to share many of the same modes of thought and frequently to act in situations of social conflict as one dominant

\* Cf. Ch. viii, pp. 345-6.

† *Annual Register*, n.s., 1884, 'Retrospect of Literature, Science, etc.' p. 78.

It is not surprising that a casual laborer who became a labor leader should have read books on social questions in his youth, but the extent to which scientific thought influenced Benjamin Tillett is indicative, also, of the spirit of the time. After speaking of reading Haeckel, Huxley, Spencer, Darwin, Cardinal Newman, and Carlyle, he says: 'My sympathies were with the agnostic school. I read Huxley's *Essays on Controverted Questions* and they helped not merely to puzzle my ill-trained brain, but provoked me to battle.' (Ben Tillett, *Memories and Reflections*, London, J. Long, 1931, p. 77.)

‡ See Ch. v, pp. 174-89, for specific statements of changes in the dominant beliefs of the 'eighties.

class. They were united by ties of blood.\* Since 1832 they had sat together in Parliament. Bagehot wrote: 'The House of Commons still mainly represents the plutocracy, the Lords represent the aristocracy. The main interest of both these classes is now identical, which is to prevent or mitigate the rule of uneducated members.' Both were beneficiaries of the progress and expectancy of nineteenth-century industrial expansion and regarded themselves—even when during a depression the Unseen Hand was less visible than usual—as instruments of Progress and of Providence.

Leading economists and social philosophers voiced the conclusions which this mounting prosperity illustrated and which natural science supported. The elaborate philosophical structure of Herbert Spencer derived from Darwin's theory of evolution and used a simplified view of the survival of the fittest to reinforce the psychology of the market place. Auguste Comte attempted to substitute 'altruistic' for 'egotistic' impulses in men, but his entire system of Positivism was an attempt to make the explanations of natural science encompass human existence, and his Religion of Humanity translated Protestant morality into what he regarded as scientific categories.

Even the rebels shared some of these basic assumptions, or their deviations were explained away. Carlyle fought economic liberalism, but he fought it on the principles of the Old and New Testaments. George Eliot's life did not fit into Victorian categories but she was 'excused' because she was a genius. Dickens, in the name of humanity, attacked the classical economists, but he fought social abuses as an individualist and as an individualist was welcomed by his age. Frederic Harrison worked for social reform under the banner of Science and Morality.

The attitudes of men toward society and toward them-

\* See K. B. Smellie, *A Hundred Years of English Government*, London, Duckworth, 1937, p. 136; Simon Haxey, *England's Money Lords* (English ed. entitled *Tory M.P.*), New York, Harrison-Hilton, 1939, pp. 157-9. Cf. Escott, *England*, pp. 301-11 and chapter on 'The Structure of English Society,' for big business aspects of landholding, especially where mining and industrial interests are involved.

selves may be regarded as variations on the themes of what they desire or expect, and to what or whom they look for fulfilment, what they fear and hate, and what or whom they blame for any frustration of their hopes. At this period business men and social philosophers alike tended to believe that what men wanted from life would be attained—in so far as it could be attained—through a continuation of processes then going on in society. Their basic hope and expectation was vested in the further development of natural science, carried over into society as 'natural law,' combined with individual striving.

They feared state intervention or 'radicalism' or foreign competition or anything else which might interfere with the continuance of these beneficent processes. They blamed any defects on wanton interference by individuals or nations with the 'laws' which operated in the social as in the physical world or on moral failure of individual effort. The universe was neutral and, with rational effort of individuals acting as instruments of God or Nature, would become benign; anyone who failed to profit by it must be personally inadequate; he had only himself to blame. Doom of men's hopes was a thing of the past if they would be content to place their hopes in those things which science and industry were ever more abundantly offering, and if they would devote their lives to hard work to get them.

Thus the doctrine of economic liberalism was not a way of interpreting *one* area of life, while religion, personal relations, or art developed their own philosophies; rather, except to maverick critics, it was the central, guiding philosophy of the period by which others must stand or fall—or in relation to which they must become unimportant.

Hume and Paley, Burke and Rousseau, Godwin and Malthus, Cobbett and Huskisson, Bentham and Coleridge, Darwin and the Bishop of Oxford, were all, it was discovered, preaching practically the same thing—Individualism and *laissez-faire*. This was the Church of England and those her apostles, whilst the company of the economists were there to prove that the least deviation into impiety involved financial ruin.<sup>5</sup>

Beliefs and attitudes, concerning the nature of reality and of man, concerning freedom and the basis of power, concerning social organization and social change, all grew out of this central body of doctrine. Economic liberalism—the belief that all things work together for good for those who help themselves, are let alone, and put their faith in the ‘natural law’ of private enterprise and private property—was the social philosophy of most articulate Englishmen. To deal with the problems of an England which had become an empire of 8,000,000 square miles and 268,000,000 people, an England of close intra-communication, predominantly urban, an England of chronic unemployment and poverty, of joint stock companies, the Railway Ring, and the Bank of England—the dominant class, governing England and expressing its philosophy, had available as a formulated philosophy belief in individual enterprise, in laissez-faire.

This does not mean that in actual practice economic liberalism at this time, or at any period during the nineteenth century, held undisputed control. Ever since the first factory act of 1802, modifications of laissez-faire, expressed in extensions of state control, took place concurrently with the removal of restrictions on apprenticeship and trade, which theoretically left economic liberalism unchallenged.\* While laissez-faire was being extended in commerce, state intervention was already beginning in industry. But it is still true that for twenty or thirty years following the collapse of Chartism, these deviations from economic liberalism were not generally recognized as affecting the theory. It was still ‘the philosophy in office.’

Nor did protests against the results of economic liberalism in the lives of men substantially alter the doctrine. Dickens’ attacks on the uncovered coal pit, Little Bethal, the workhouse, and Mr. Gradgrind could arouse sympathy and stimulate special reforms, and still be put to one side as the exag-

\* Cf. Paul Mantoux’s statement that the cotton industry of England never grew up under actual laissez-faire conditions but always had protection from foreign competition. (*The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1927, pp. 262-3; also laissez-faire in regard to labor, *ibid.* p. 457.)

generations of a novelist. Carlyle denounced the Lancashire factories as turning this earth into Tophet, and fought Utilitarianism with Biblical precepts, but he offered pre-industrial and anti-democratic solutions which alienated two sections of British opinion. Ruskin's merging of medieval art and social reform attracted enthusiastic audiences and led to isolated projects of good works rather than to basic questioning of the organization of society. During the period of complacent prosperity, exceptions in practice and protests on the outskirts left the central body of beliefs unshaken.

As the 'seventies turned into the 'eighties, however, criticisms of the accepted philosophy were making themselves increasingly felt; but the doctrine of economic individualism was never stated more clearly and emphatically. The fact that the orthodox were re-affirming their creed in the face of attack meant that the philosophy was more sharply defined than when it was taking shape a century earlier. Adam Smith could assert without proof or rancor the desirability of freedom from state control, but Herbert Spencer fought to maintain the struggle for existence.

The philosophy of economic liberalism was rooted in the nineteenth century version of Natural Law.

The doctrine of natural law had undergone a curious transformation in Protestant Western-European thought. As developed by the Stoics, amplified by the Medieval Church, and made the basis of international and constitutional law by Grotius and his successors, the philosophy of natural law was an affirmation of faith in the nature of man and in the possibility that society could be guided by man's desire for justice and well-being.<sup>6</sup> From Panaetius of Rhodes to Rousseau the concept of a fundamental harmony between human nature and nature at large carried with it a belief in the goodness and reasonableness of the world, in the possibility of the organization of society fulfilling the basically good nature of man.

The nineteenth-century doctrine of the law of nature, as used by the Physiocrats, Adam Smith, and Spencer, embodied this belief in reverse. The pre-determined harmony between



human nature and nature at large meant that nature was governed by inexorable economic laws to which man must conform at his peril. Man and nature were still held to be in harmony, but emphasis had shifted from human nature to physical nature, from the validity of human rights to the unalterable character of natural forces. This carried with it a belief in the helplessness rather than the rights of man, and in the necessity of man's submitting to the supposed laws of society.

The older theory of natural law had been an attempt to defend moral values on logical grounds. The newer theory abandoned the false logic involved in this attempt in favor of 'scientific fact'; in so doing it abandoned the moral values as well. At a time when physical scarcity was disappearing as a prison for men, classical economics erected a new prison of what might be called moral scarcity. According to this new theory of the law of nature, the nature of man was narrowed to his economic interests and the nature of society to conformity to economic laws. The meagreness of this theory in a world of potential abundance was concealed by directing attention to external security and satisfaction arising from prosperity. Belief in the potential goodness of man and of the world had been replaced by a belief in the goodness of wealth as a sign of well-being.

This limited theory of natural law, resting on the belief in economic laws as immutable as physical laws, was basic to the philosophy of economic liberalism. It appears in the law of supply and demand, in Ricardo's 'iron law of wages,' and in the homely aphorism then current in which prices are assumed to be governed by the law of gravitation, 'Everything that goes up has to come down.' *The Economist*, in reviewing Alfred Marshall's *Economics of Industry*, published in 1879, asserted,

The labour of the economic thinker is only successful when he explains the real working of natural forces, however overlaid they may be by social habits, however unwilling social prejudice may be to admit that they are ultimately irresistible.<sup>7</sup>

As late as 1894, the Majority Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, expressing a point of view then on the defensive, said.

Many of the evils to which our attention has been called are such as cannot be remedied by any legislation, but we may look with confidence to their gradual amendment by natural forces now in operation which tend to substitute a state of industrial peace for one of industrial division and conflict . . .

As the terms of what is virtually a partnership between employers and workmen come to be better understood . . . a natural end will be found to . . . conflicts . . .

The majority of witnesses before this Commission, zealous guardians of economic interests that were threatened and of a philosophy that had then lost its supremacy, viewed every problem in terms of unalterable natural forces rather than of human welfare, and found it impossible to conceive of human welfare except in terms of conformity to natural law.

This appears, for example, in the testimony of Hugh Bell, son of Sir Lowthian Bell, of the firm of Bell Brothers, mine owners and iron masters:

One of the [men's] objections [to the sliding scale of wages] \* . . . is that the scale does not sufficiently rapidly respond . . . to upward changes in price. Now, it appears to me that that is in the nature of things . . .

It is in the nature of things that . . . [the top price] should only be got for a very small quantity, and therefore the top price cannot be reflected to a large extent in that out of which the owners alone can pay wages, viz., the returns they get for the material they sell.

In point of fact the demand overtakes production. The producer strains every nerve to follow after the demand, in order that he may reap the harvest of the high price. At the very top moment he attains it, and more than supplies the demand, and down the price tumbles and that, I am afraid . . . is in the nature of things. We must be alternately slowly climbing up the incline, rushing up the slope of the mountain, tumbling over the precipice at the top, rolling down the foot-hills, crawling along

\* For discussion of the sliding wage scale, see Ch. VII, pp. 211, 261-5.

the valley, and then beginning the thing over again. That . . . is in the nature of things<sup>9</sup>

The laws of society were good in so far as they did not interfere with the laws of nature; it was 'unreasonable' to find fault with either.

Belief in this kind of natural law, which had taken its character from an unwarranted extension of Newton's celestial mechanics, received a new lease on life from a similar embracing rather than understanding of Darwin. The Darwinians taught that free competition had not only built London but had built Man. 'The principle of the Survival of the Fittest could be regarded as a vast generalisation of the Ricardian economics.' \*

The social philosophers of the late nineteenth century who were basing their theories on nineteenth-century physical science and on Darwin thought they were making a great advance over the Locke school of social philosophy, which derived from Newton. But they were limited in at least two ways in their use of scientific thought: they made the error of rigid analogy in taking over the discoveries instead of the methods of scientific thought in application to social questions;<sup>10</sup> and they were working in a period when scientists themselves tended to think that the results of their work were co-extensive with reality, and that knowledge of truth could be attained through increasing refinement of instruments of measurement. Neither scientists nor social philosophers fully realized that 'every kind of classification is inevitably vitiated by a certain element of caprice and hence of one-sidedness.'<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, science had not yet discovered through the quantum theory that there is a fixed limitation of exact measurement,<sup>12</sup> since exactness of measurement of position and of movement are in inverse ratio to each other.<sup>13</sup> The taking over by social scientists of the quantitative preoccupation of natural scientists was based

\* John Maynard Keynes, *The End of Laissez-Faire*, London, Hogarth Press, 1926, pp. 13-14. Writers of the 'eighties referred to 'our modern god Science,' e.g. Ellice Hopkins in 'Social Wreckage,' *Contemporary Review*, July 1883, Vol. XLIV, p. 98.

upon premises which natural scientists were later to discard.

Writing from the perspective of half a century later, Beatrice Webb said of this faith in the results of natural science as applied to all areas of life:

. . . it is hard to understand the naive belief of the most original and vigorous minds of the 'seventies and 'eighties that it was by science and by science alone that all human misery would be ultimately swept away. This almost fanatical faith was perhaps partly due to hero-worship. For who will deny that the men of science were the leading British intellectuals of that period; . . . that it was they who were the self-confident militants of the period; that it was they who were routing the theologians, confounding the mystics, imposing their theories on philosophers, their inventions on capitalists, and their discoveries on medical men; whilst they were at the same time snubbing the artists, ignoring the poets and even casting doubt on the capacity of the politicians? Nor was the cult of the scientific method confined to intellectuals. 'Halls of Science' were springing up in crowded working-class districts; and Bradlaugh, the fearless exponent of scientific materialism and the 'Fruits of Philosophy,' was the most popular demagogue of the hour.<sup>14</sup>

Herbert Spencer, considered by his own generation the Spinoza of his time, and by succeeding generations 'as an antidote not to reason, but to the belief that reason is easy to apply,'<sup>15</sup> epitomized this naive faith in natural science. He built his entire Synthetic Philosophy<sup>16</sup> and System of Social Statics<sup>17</sup> on the application of the 'laws of natural science' to society. Writing in the *Contemporary Review* in 1881 articles later to be republished as *Man versus the State*, he used the theories of Darwin to prove that man was not so much in harmony with as governed by laws of society as inexorable as those of the physical world. Strict limitation of state power would inevitably secure the survival of the fittest; if laissez-faire and free contract were allowed to prevail uninterfered with, natural law could operate in society and all would be well. Every attempt to interfere with citizens' activities other than by enforcing their mutual limitations is a proposal to improve life by breaking through the con-

ditions of life. He discriminated sharply between administration of justice, which is to be left to the State, and generosity, which should be left to private philanthropy. He expressed amazement that de Laveleye's criticism of laissez-faire should go so far as 'to deny that in the average of cases proportioning of rewards to personal merits naturally takes place under the free play of supply and demand.'<sup>18</sup>

Certain of Spencer's followers, notably the Reverend William L. Blackley, reasoned that any human misery that existed was either inevitable or was the direct result of the refusal of individuals or of the State to submit themselves to the laws of nature:

. . . if the whole amount . . . earnable by any class of workers must be insufficient to enable that class . . . to live with a margin, it must be because the natural rate of wages . . . is disturbed by some extraneous force, such as rate-aid to the thriftless or wanton charity to the undeserving . . .

. . . we must remember . . . that no matter how low wages have ever fallen, and no matter how high the cost of existence has ever risen, there have been people found . . . who have lived, saved, thriven, risen and even become wealthy men . . .

If exceptions be found to the natural laws that

the labour of each individual could provide . . . existence to every son of toil . . . their existence . . . [is] traceable to the folly of governments or the improvidence of individuals . . . [Compulsory insurance] makes a hell on earth for the best of our working men and compels the thrifty to provide for the wasteful by the poor rate.<sup>19</sup>

If faith in natural law as revealed by science was one pillar of economic liberalism, faith in rational individual human effort was the other. The idea of personal liberty, 'liberty of the subject,' had been enshrined in English law from Magna Carta on. From the time of Hobbes, if not from the time of Calvin, it was relations and the organization of society, not separate individuals, which required explanation.\*

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Individual atoms of humanity were taken for granted; social relationships—society—were regarded as ‘artificial.’ Individual human beings were held directly responsible for their own welfare. Even Mill’s *Liberty*, which was actually a forecast of positive individual freedom enhanced rather than threatened by society,\* was read as another plea for negative freedom—for individuals seen once more as rational, calculating, disparate, competing atoms in society, driven to interest or effort solely by economic need. This interpretation of individualism was voiced by Cliffe Leslie: ‘. . . the fundamental idea of modern English economy [is] that every man should be free to follow his own pecuniary interest as he thinks fit without fraud.’<sup>20</sup>

According to Auberon Herbert, who was described by Sidney Webb as serving the function of a stick by the side of a glacier to measure progress, ‘nature’ is on the side of self-ownership and self-guidance. Herbert believed that each man and woman is endowed by nature with ‘a special machinery for self-guidance’; therefore, there should be no interference by the State even for the preservation of life, health, and education; character forms best under the stimulus of effort.<sup>21</sup>

In one form or another, with modifications on specific points, this idea recurs as still the accepted doctrine of the time:

. . . the causes of the inequality of wealth lie deep in the foundation of human nature and the constitution of the world, and no laws can essentially alter them . . . The utmost you can expect of a state is to give a fair chance to every one, and free play to all the powers and capacities of its citizens.<sup>22</sup>

Good and bad lay in the isolated man; what he gained was due to his own virtue, conforming to natural law; if he did not gain the cause was his own guilt.

The Liberty and Property Defence League was ostensibly the community in which he lives, were explanations arrived at after his earlier conception of the separateness of men.

\* See pp. 99-103 below.



an organized collective endorsement of belief in autonomous individual effort. Its membership suggested the fact of English class-structured society behind the philosophy of liberalism. It was founded early in the 'eighties 'for resisting Over-legislation, for maintaining Freedom of Contract, and for advocating Individualism as opposed to Socialism, entirely irrespective of Party Politics.' \* At the end of the decade an American student of England wrote of it:

Nearly every member of the committee of the League has a title. Its chairman, the Earl of Wemyss, who is the proprietor of 60,000 British acres, makes an annual speech to empty benches in the House of Lords, giving an account up to date of the dangerous advances of Socialism among the working men, in Parliament and in the church . . .<sup>23</sup>

In 1885 the League was able to report that it had enlisted the sympathy and support of thousands who had hitherto held aloof from party strife, 'including some of the best-known representatives of the shipping, the railroad, the land interests,' and many others who 'have been despoiled by the philanthropic but inexperienced busybodies of the new school,' and it roundly reaffirmed that the best medicine for all social ills was liberty.<sup>24</sup>

W. H. Mallock, the League's most vigorous pamphleteer, based his support of classical economics in part on psychological grounds and urged the creation of a 'science of human action.' Until this should be obtained, he supplied the lack.

Wealth, he held, begins civilization by creating and satisfying a want:

'The condition of the labouring classes is . . . proportionate to their faculty of desire. If they are poor, squalid, and dependent, it is because they have no efficient desire to be anything else . . . 'The magnificence of the castle does not come from the plunder of the alley, but it is the cause of the alley existing, where otherwise there would be no shelter at all.

\* Statement of purpose of the League at the end of pamphlet publications, e.g. found in Wordsworth Donisthorpe, *Liberty or Law*, 6d. pamphlet of the Liberty and Property Defence League, London, 1885.

. . . wealth . . . is not a physical accumulation to any important extent . . . it is a power of direction or of organization . . . a power of distributing and applying motive . . . the rich as a body, are fulfilling a distinct function by the mere enjoyment of their riches . . . men only desire them [riches] because they are seen to be desirable when their possessors are seen enjoying them.

The wealthy classes are a kind of elevated reflector, which receives all of scattered knowledge, experiences, and thought of all the classes beneath them, and returns their various rays, woven together in a growing, or, at all events, a changing intellectual daylight.\*

Inequality and self-interest he regarded as essentials:

No action is possible, unless prompted by some form of self-interest; indeed *self-interest* is but another name for *motive* . . . It is according to the proportion that these [imagination and reason] have to each other that their practical outcome is either ambition or envy . . . Thus a Parisian workman who longs for wealth, and sees his way to attaining it, works hard, and in time becomes a capitalist. A Parisian workman who longs for wealth, but who will not or cannot achieve it, becomes a Communist and burns down the Tuileries.<sup>25</sup>

[There is] a feeling common to all classes—a dislike of the thought of suffering . . . But . . . there is added to the wish for this end . . . the wish for equality; and these two so instantly coalesce, that, in the popular mind, it is very difficult to distinguish between them. Hence comes endless confusion and falsehood.<sup>26</sup>

Likewise representing the League, Wordsworth Donisthorpe asserted that whether shareholders were to be 'robbed in the old-fashioned style or tricked out of their rights by an obscure Act of Parliament' was 'a question for those whose policy was spoliation with decency.'<sup>27</sup>

Responsible economists, with no less emphasis, though in more measured terms than interested pamphleteers, were un-

\* W. H. Mallock, 'The Functions of Wealth,' *Contemporary Review*, February 1882, Vol. 41, pp. 195-220. Cf. the statement quoted from 'Passionate Kensington' in the *New Statesman and Nation* for 29 July 1939: 'I am certain that the world needs contrast and the slums supply it.'

tiring in asserting the laws of political economy as the philosophy of human welfare. The existence of a 'wage fund,' the law of supply and demand, the efficacy of free competition—these 'scientific laws' could not be altered. Men could best serve their own ends and those of society by untiring individual effort in conformity with them. In 1885 *The Economist* was lamenting that 'absolute truth' like Mr. Chamberlain's exposure of the result of protection in the United States was treated as part of Mr. Chamberlain's political philosophy, and therefore as an arguable matter. Political economy should be treated as a science, and party speeches were as much out of place in its temple as they would be in meetings of the Royal Society, or of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.<sup>28</sup> In 1890, after many breaks had been made in the entrenched doctrine of laissez-faire, *The Economist* scouted the idea that any bill to regulate hours or wages of labor could be 'seriously considered,' since it would be a ridiculous and unthinkable invasion of individual freedom.<sup>29</sup>

Writing of the Berlin Labour Conference in 1890 *The Economist* commented:

The work actually performed by the Conference confirms the opinion . . . that philanthropic rhetoric, however sincere its inspiration, could not possibly alter the hard facts of economic science, and that the moment the delegates attempted to deal with the problem of how to mitigate the fury of industrial competition, they would discover that to do so was the very last thing they really wanted.<sup>30</sup>

Far-reaching assumptions about human nature and society are implicit in the statements of Mallock and others quoted above. These statements assume: a theory of human nature—that men are not naturally active but must be driven, that desire is not inherent in human beings but is a matter of imitation, that poverty is a man's own fault; a theory of wealth and the wealthy—that they perform a social service by existing to be imitated; a justification of inequality in income and inequality in social status—and thereby a justifi-

cation of class stratification of society. This theory of the rewards of individual human effort leads, also, to a theory of power and authority. Those who have put forth the energy which has been crowned with success, success in the form of profits and property, are those who have shown that they have power and who, therefore, should have the right to authority over others.<sup>31</sup>

Beatrice Webb, writing of her father, 'a capitalist at large' who, in the four decades following 1850, spent 'the bulk of his energy and all his intellectual keenness in the administration of public companies and in financial speculation,' said:

The class consciousness that was present . . . was the consciousness of superior power. I became aware that I belonged to a class of persons who habitually gave orders, but who seldom, if ever, executed the orders of other people . . . My father, by temperament the least autocratic and most accommodating of men, spent his whole life giving orders . . .<sup>32</sup>

. . . I used to ponder over the ethics of capitalist enterprise as represented by my father's acts and axioms . . . he thought, felt and acted in terms of personal relationship and not in terms of general principles; he had no clear vision of the public good . . . Hence he tended to prefer the welfare of his family and personal friends to the interests of the companies over which he presided, the profits of these companies to the prosperity of his country, the dominance of his own race to the peace of the world . . .<sup>33</sup>

Of British society at this period she said:

There were no fixed caste barriers; . . . But . . . there *was* a test of fitness for membership of this most gigantic of all social clubs . . . *the possession of some form of power over other people*. The most obvious form of power, and the most easily measurable, was the power of wealth. Hence any family of outstanding riches, if its members were not actually mentally deficient or legally disreputable, could hope to rise to the top, marry its daughters to Cabinet Ministers and noblemen, and even become in time itself ennobled . . . The conventional requirements with regard to personal morality, sexual or financial, were

graded with almost meticulous exactitude to the degree of social, political or industrial power exercised by the person concerned . . .<sup>31</sup>

Evidence of power rather than intelligence, said Bagehot, is basic for government. 'Sensible men of substantial means are what we wish to be ruled by, and a peerage of genius would not compare with it in power.'<sup>35</sup>

The tangible sign of power was wealth, private property, profit. Profit supplied the motive, the means, and the result of individual enterprise. Property was, therefore, self-justifying and self-explanatory, supported by natural law and by rational individual choice, an essential element in social welfare. Lord Salisbury, for example, recognized not 'good or bad landlords' but simply property owners.

I . . . doubt whether the conduct of any large class is guided . . . by anything but a liberal appreciation of their own interests.<sup>36</sup>

It is owing to no superhuman weakness on the part of the Irish landlord that you have adopted a system of State management, instead of giving free play to the market; and you must accept all the results which that deviation from sound principles will lead you to. One result is to check the ordinary play of human motives in conserving the interests and peace of the country.<sup>37</sup>

There is something more precious than security of tenure and that is security of property.<sup>38</sup>

'The sliding wage scale of the 'seventies and 'eighties was based upon the idea that other things could be taken care of after profits were secure; welfare must, of necessity, follow profits. Assurance of profits as the indispensable basis for the consideration of other problems pervaded discussions of industry and welfare.\* As late as 1890 *The Times* insisted:

'The disregard of the rights of property which is being preached in many directions by persons who style themselves reformers,

\* Cf. Th. Rothstein, *From Chartism to Labourism*, London, Lawrence, 1929, pp. 206-7.

would tend, if ever brought into practical operation, to carry back mankind to a state of savagery . . . If civilization is to be maintained, the owners of mining royalties, and, for that matter, the owners of ground rents, also, must be free to take their property into the open market and to deal with it there to the greatest advantage.<sup>39</sup>

The men who ruled England found it easy to regard wealth as a sign of power and of welfare, deriving justification from common sense, from science, and from reason. 'The customary,' the 'scientific,' and the 'reasonable,' came to be identified. 'My special safeguard against . . . mental despair,' wrote Lord Randolph Churchill, 'is my firm belief in the . . . common sense which is the peculiarity of the English people.'<sup>40</sup> The leaders of England were glad to believe that every man of sense could be 'his own philosopher and scientist,'<sup>41</sup> and that 'Science is nothing . . . but trained and organised common sense.'<sup>42</sup> It was their own common sense—the common sense of energetic, competent individuals. Trained and organized, it had substituted steel for iron and built railroads and laid cables. Through the theory of evolution it had provided a further justification for competitive profit-making. There were no limits to its power and no need to invoke other powers to supplement it. Speaking at Glasgow in 1883, Bright expressed the opinion that there were no issues left upon which great conflicts were likely to arise.<sup>43</sup>

Matthew Arnold was eloquent on the subject of this British faith in 'common sense' as he found it both among aristocratic 'Barbarians' and among middle class 'Philistines.' Of the former he wrote:

. . . With Mr. Tennyson, they celebrate 'the great broad-shouldered genial Englishman' with his 'sense of duty,' his 'reverence for the laws,' and his 'patient force,' who saves us from the 'revolts, republics, revolutions . . .' which upset other and less broad-shouldered nations . . .<sup>44</sup>

One has often wondered whether upon the whole earth there is anything so unintelligent, so unapt to perceive how the world

is really going, as an ordinary young Englishman of our upper class.<sup>45</sup>

The common sense of Philistines he liked even less:

. . . Philistine gives the notion of something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light . . . and therein it specially suits our middle class, who not only do not pursue sweetness and light, but who even prefer to them that sort of machinery of business, chapels, tea-meetings, and addresses by Mr. Murphy, which makes up their . . . dismal and illiberal life . . .<sup>46</sup>

. . . Our middle class, the great representative of trade and Dissent, with its maxims of every man for himself in business, every man for himself in religion, dreads a powerful administration which might . . . prevent its exercising . . . [its own decorative inutilities of vestrymanship and guardianship] in its own comfortable, independent manner, as at present.<sup>47</sup>

If questions were raised about the theory of economic individualism on which these men built their world, a final answer was found in Progress.\* Progress tended to silence doubts, and to blur conflicts, even the conflict between science and religion. Progress had been demonstrated practically in the economic expansion of England and theoretically in the systems of Spencer and Comte. Morley was voicing the accepted ideas of his day in saying that the generation of 1860 to 1890 was:

a generation of intrepid effort forward . . . Belief in progress had become the basis of social thought, and had even taken the place of religion as the inspiring, guiding, and testing power over social action . . . let us remain invincibly sure that Progress stands for a working belief that the modern world will never be content to do without.<sup>48</sup>

Of the nineteenth century Alfred Russel Wallace wrote:

\* Cf. Kingsley Martin's description of Lord Lothian in 1940: 'He had that natural optimism of temperament that suits so well the English gentleman and aristocrat.' (*New Statesman and Nation*, 21 December 1940, p. 650.)

Looking back through the long dark vista of human history, the one step in material progress that seems to be really comparable in importance with several of the steps we have just made, was, when Fire was first utilized, and became the servant and the friend, instead of being the master and the enemy of man.<sup>49</sup>

Unlimited progress through science was exalted in the widely read *Martyrdom of Man* by Winwood Reade, first published in 1872:

When we have ascertained, by means of Science, the methods of Nature's operation, we shall be able to take her place and to perform them for ourselves . . . men will master the forces of Nature; they will become themselves architects of systems, manufacturers of worlds. Man then will be perfect; he will then be a creator; he will therefore be what the vulgar worship as a God.<sup>50</sup>

It was no great step from such a faith in Science and in Progress to the Positivism of Auguste Comte. The system of Comte represented the acme of an elaborate verbal structure which concealed the discrepancies between the theory of nineteenth-century liberalism and the facts of Victorian life. It offered a rationalization for the Victorian compromise between science and religion, between the economics of the market place and Protestant morality. For Mill, although he never became a sectarian Positivist, the system of Comte provided a way of reconciling the Benthamite ideal of a scientifically ordered society with Coleridge's idea of historical development.<sup>51</sup> To Frederic Harrison and Beesly it offered the possibility of combining faith in science with active humanitarian interest in the condition of the working classes—a possibility not allowed by the equally elaborate verbal structure of Spencer. By their emphasis on the social character of wealth these English Positivists offered a means of conciliation between socialists and defenders of property, between imperialists and their opponents.<sup>52</sup> For Morley, Francis Newman, and other writers in the *Fortnightly Review*, Positivism furnished an organized method for dealing with society in terms of a 'rational religion.' 'Scientific truth



was the sanction of their criticism; rationalism was their method.' \*

The Positivist doctrine appeared in Leslie Stephen's *Ethics*, the aim of which was:

To lay down an ethical doctrine in harmony with the doctrine of evolution.

To apply to conduct the Darwinian theory that natural selection tends to produce in character as well as in physical life—the type of maximum efficiency.

[To show that] society is not a mere aggregate but an organic growth,—that it forms a whole, the laws of whose growth can be studied apart from those of the individual atom <sup>53</sup>

Positivism was particularly congenial to the trend in English thought which held that one master formula could solve all problems from the extension of railroads to increase in human happiness. It combined in one gigantic historical blue-print faith in science, in power based upon the rationality and energy of men, and in material progress, with skepticism about a world which lies beyond invention and industry. 'Positive philosophy' rested upon 'perfect mental coherence.' <sup>54</sup> Furthermore, by offering a comprehensive formulation of the faith that the laws of society conformed to the laws of natural science, it formed one definite stream which entered into the growing tide of socialism. Frederic Harrison wrote: 'Positivism is a complete, universal, and religious socialism—not a socialism limited to material products. It is a socialism founded on social science and inspired by religion.' †

\* Edwin Mallard Everett, *The Party of Humanity: The Fortnightly Review and Its Contributors: 1865-1874*, University of North Carolina Press, 1939, p. 141.

Jevons wrote in 1878, 'I do not always like the company I am in [in the *Contemporary Review*]; and yet, on the whole, their company is more congenial than that of the Comtists who reign in the *Fortnightly*' (*Letters and Journals of W. Stanley Jevons*, ed. by his wife, London, Macmillan, 1886, p. 381.) Cf. discussion of rationalism and agnosticism, Ch. VIII, pp. 310-47.

† Frederic Harrison, 'Moral and Religious Socialism' (1891), in *National and Social Problems*, New York, Macmillan, 1908, p. 429.

See also Ch. VIII, pp. 342-3, for the influence of Positivism on religious thought.

It could be said in the early 'nineties that 'Positivism's god had died. The cult still lingered on . . . a mummified faith among the multiform vestiges of human folly.' But Positivism had influenced Mill and Spencer and Arnold and Morley as well as Frederic Harrison; it was considered at one time to be the creed of the *Fortnightly Review* and could be seen in the discussions of philosophic doubt and belief in the *Nineteenth Century*.<sup>55</sup>

Positivism was one more expression of middle-class liberalism. Originally laissez-faire had been an instrument of escape from power. It attempted to put plenty in place of political power. But as plenty grew laissez-faire became an instrument of a new power rooted in free enterprise. Strong in this new power the prosperous middle class were free to make a society in their own image.

What that image was has been suggested. The middle class, having secured 'liberty of the subject' and economic freedom, both forms of freedom from external restraints, had created for themselves a new bondage, a moral scarcity, narrowing the desires of man to gain, and the fruits of freedom to profit. Progress meant material advance and spiritual complacency.

This view of life, based on natural law and individual responsibility, embodied the attitude of the dominant middle class toward themselves and their own way of life. It also underlay and justified their attitude toward the workers, the majority of the population of England. If middle-class industrialists were instruments of Nature and of God enforcing justice, it was right that others should conform to their standards. Their moral indignation, that great stock in trade of the middle class, was directed against anyone who criticized or could not profit by their way of life. Any sense of responsibility or concern for a society in which unemployment and poverty were chronic could be turned by directing indignation against the people who were unemployed and poor, who were unable to participate in a way of life which had so amply justified itself.

*Hard Times* might defend the equality of all the people against Bounderby and Gradgrind; Carlyle might denounce poverty in the name of the Bible, and Ruskin in the name of art; Frederic Harrison and his associates might preach socialism in the name of Positivism. But in generally accepted doctrine and in common speech any discrepancy between the expansive idea of British progress and the actual condition of the mass of the people was regarded not as the problem of Poverty, but as the problem of 'the Poor.' The existence of people who were poor could not be denied. The Dandies and the Drudges of *Sartor Resartus*, the two nations of *Sybil*, had been turned into statistically verifiable elite and flies of the market place by the studies of Giffen and Booth.\* But in contemporary usage 'the Poor' was regarded as a term descriptive not of a condition of society but of the character of a group of people.† 'Enlightened' employers such as Kay-Shuttleworth and Bright urged 'self-employment' of the Poor and helped to provide schools and Sunday Schools; Tory philanthropists were 'kind to their tenants as to their dogs and cats.' But 'the Poor' remained a fixed category for a section of the population.

To the majority of the dominant group the elimination of poverty did not present itself as a problem or a possibility worthy of discussion. What should be done was, on the one hand, to stimulate the Poor toward self-reliance and thrift by the prod of necessity, and, this failing, to exercise, under rational controls, 'benevolence' and 'charity,' mitigating the condition of the Poor.

This attitude of regarding poverty as a permanent characteristic of a group of people was not confined to an aristocrat like Lord Salisbury, who complained in Parliament that he lived in a county where 'vagrants' 'had become perfect pests,' and that, 'in justice to the ratepayers of a county some less

\* See Ch. II, pp. 52-4.

† Cf. Goetz A. Briefs, *The Proletariat: A Challenge to Western Civilization*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1937, pp. 5-8, for a discussion of the long association in English thought of 'the Poor' and 'the workers' as interchangeable terms.

cumbersome remedy [than jailing those applying for relief a second time] should be provided by the legislature': <sup>56</sup>

Formerly, the great mainstay of the British Constitution with regard to a vagrant was washing him. It used to be that if they washed him frequently, and made the water cold enough, they would drive him away; but that resource has failed, and the vagrant . . . [goes] to his bath with the utmost courage.<sup>57</sup>

This attitude appeared, also, among philanthropic educators, such as Mr. Henry Ryder Williams, chairman of the 'Ragged School Union,' mission schools for children 'too poor and too ill-clad, and too ill-fed' to be taken in by the 'voluntary' (religious) schools.<sup>58</sup>

*Ques.* Do you think that the mere fact that schools were called ragged schools caused a want of self-respect in those who attended them?

*Ans.* No, the fact of their being called ragged schools inclined the ragged classes to say, 'This is my school; it is a ragged school, and therefore, I am going to the ragged school.'<sup>59</sup>

That the Poor were a special kind of people was the view, also, of such a person as Thomas Mackay, chronicler of the English Poor Law, who spoke of the operation of the Law in relation to the 'motives and character of the poor.'<sup>60</sup> Francis Peek went further in making explicit the long-implied distinction between 'the deserving poor' and 'the workless and thriftless and the worthless,'<sup>61</sup> though he would not have drawn the deduction of Mr. Doolittle that the needs of the undeserving poor are greater than those of the deserving:

I don't need less than a deserving man; I need more. I don't eat less hearty than him and I drink a lot more . . . I want cheerfulness and a song and a band when I feel low. Well, they charge me just the same for everything as they charge the deserving. What is middle class morality? Just an excuse for never giving me anything.

This view of the Poor as an identifiable sort of people appears in the discussion on unemployment before the Royal Commission on Labour:

The Poor Law tars them all [all classes] with the same brush, quite ignoring the fact that what is luxury to a costermonger is misery to a working engineer, and impossible for a briefless barrister.<sup>62</sup>

The idea that hard work and thrift were the appropriate ways for the Poor to express themselves found as clear statement at this period as in the time of Malthus. This was the assumption of many examiners and witnesses before the Royal Commissions of the 'eighties and 'nineties:

*Ques.* Take the case of a young man from say 20 to 40 years of age, do you think that he could employ his time very much better under all the circumstances than by spending two or three hours more down the pit, i.e. 10 to 11 hours instead of 7 or 8, and earning more money and putting it by for a rainy day, or when he is an old man? <sup>63</sup>

*Ques.* Then . . . it is an improvement in humanity to have Saturday half holiday . . . and they are willing to sacrifice the loss of wages that it entails?

*Ans.* I do not think it is an improvement. I should think that if they get the seventh day always, it would be much more meritorious for them if they worked the other six. I think they would be much happier if they worked the six days.\*

A sensible increase in the rate of saving by the labouring classes would have an enormous effect in improving their condition, for it would bring down the rate of interest on home securities . . . and so would cause a larger portion of the reward of British industries to be appropriated to labour in the form of wages. Improvement . . . is to be looked for in the progress of invention and education, and, above all, in the virtue of thrift.†

As incentives to responsibility and thrift, public provision for dealing with the Poor still made use of the principles of the Poor Law of 1834: that 'the condition of the pauper

\* Testimony of John D. Ellis, chairman of John Brown and Co. and of the South Yorkshire Coal Association, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 21 January 1886, *Minutes of Evidence*, Part I, *Second Report*, Vol. xxi, p. 99.

† Summary of testimony of Robert Giffen before the Royal Commission on Labour, *Fifth and Final Report*, Part II, 1894, p. 341.

ought to be, on the whole, less eligible than that of the independent labourer.' Help to the Poor should, moreover, be administered in the poorhouse, on the basis of 'the workhouse test,' rather than being made available in private homes. This insistence on 'indoor' rather than 'outdoor' relief was somewhat modified in practice, but the policy of public relief being made as unpleasant as possible and being given through the workhouse, whereas private charity was administered in homes, remained a principle of separation.

Throughout the nineteenth century operation of the Poor Law was always a grudging effort to meet a necessitous problem with as little inconvenience as possible to the public and to property owners. The moral responsibility involved in poverty was re-affirmed:

. . . pauperism is a hateful and undesirable thing, but, now as formerly, it is a perfectly adequate and sufficient maintenance, and the attraction of the rival system of private ownership and free contract is not in itself sufficient to detach from the old influences the laggard population that has not yet learned the arts of the new industrial economy.\*

Destitute people should be dealt with in the parishes to which they belong, where their true character may be ascertained, and the relief given with proper discrimination.<sup>64</sup>

\* Mackay elaborates this view of the Poor: 'We mark with satisfaction the absorbent influence of a new organisation of society based on private ownership and free exchange . . . we welcome every effort . . . to remove any hindrances which still bar the transition of the proletariat from the old system which never can be restored to the new and inevitable; but . . . even with the career thrown open to talent, if we may so epitomize the inner meaning of the abolition of settlement, we have not got rid of all the baneful influence of the old Poor Law administration. Given a population long settled and maintained in a vaguely defined communism of which the Poor Law is the last surviving vestige, with its mobility impaired by the deadening influence of a parochial title to relief, and resting content with a delusive supplementation of its income from the common property of the poor-rate, instead of advancing boldly to the new economy of private ownership and freedom of exchange; given also . . . an educated public opinion that accepts the transition from the old condition of parochial status to the new condition of free contract as inevitable and on the whole beneficent, the problem is—What policy is to be pursued for the emancipation of the remnant? (Thomas Mackay, *A History of the English Poor Law*, New York, Putnam, 1900, Vol. III, pp. 482-4.)

The problem was not the elimination of poverty but rather: given the poor, how distinguish between the worthy and the unworthy? How distinguish between the legal obligation of the State to care only for 'the totally destitute' and the moral obligation or privilege of charity to assist those of 'some but insufficient means, who though on the verge of pauperism are not actual paupers'?<sup>65</sup> How to make the law flexible enough so that the harsh treatment which was 'appropriate in prosperity' should not be carried on without modification in depression?

This moral emphasis, stressing the responsibility of the Poor for their poverty, underlay private charity as well as public provision for 'distress.' Professor Leoni Levi, presenting his statistical findings to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in 1883, despite, or in accordance with, his prevailing optimism, urged charity for the poor:

A stoic indifference to their sufferings is perilous. Nay, it deprives ourselves of the luxury of sympathy, even if it be out of our power to provide any substantial remedy.

What though in scaly armour dressed  
Indifference may repel  
The shafts of woe, in such a breast  
No joy can ever dwell.

'Tis woven of the world's great plan,  
And fixed by Heaven's decree,  
'That all the true delights of man  
Should spring from sympathy.\*

But even Benevolence was no longer a virtue to be lightly carried. Rationality had invaded Charity. Like the sponsors of the Poor Law, the leaders in the Charity Organisation Society, founded in 1869, were strong individualists—people like Octavia Hill and C. S. Loch. They saw certain positive values in 'benevolence,' but were constantly fearful of 'indiscriminate charity sapping independence'<sup>66</sup> and had a

\* *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science*, Birmingham Meeting, 1884, p. 589.

'steady dislike to undue government interference with movements for assisting the poor . . . ' <sup>67</sup> Their policy was to keep people from starving without undermining their independence. They believed that 'real distress due to industrial depression' should be met by 'a fund of subsidizing agencies already at work', <sup>68</sup> that the 'un-English expedient' of public works 'started for the relief of the unemployed . . . are in the long run an injury instead of a benefit to the community, by discouraging the real spirit of work and thereby diminishing self-reliance and enterprise.' <sup>69</sup> In regard to government-supervised 'food depots,' they held that there is 'nothing which would more certainly injure the poorest part of our population than this distribution of pennyworths to all comers.' <sup>70</sup> In season and out they opposed the action of 'the frivolous [dole-giving] public . . . which supported the great army of beggars and made laziness and imposture more profitable than work.' <sup>71</sup> Their policy was to instruct 'the large dole-giving community,' and 'to purge the nation of the great hypocrisy which sends the mendicant to prison, while for the great central vice of dole-giving it has only mild reproofs, or even gentle commendation.' <sup>72</sup>

Beatrice Webb wrote of the Charity Organisation Society, with which she was closely associated:

. . . from the standpoint of the mid-Victorian time spirit there was no gainsaying the worth of the three principles upon which this . . . organization was avowedly based: patient and persistent personal service on the part of the well-to-do; an acceptance of personal responsibility for the ulterior consequences . . . of charitable assistance; and finally . . . the application of the scientific method to each separate case of a damaged body or a lost soul . . .

To the abstract economist of the period, the giving of alms or Poor Law relief seemed . . . , to have the double evil of not merely discouraging the poor from working, but also of actually injuring the more industrious by lessening the amount of the wage-fund distributed among them in return for their labor . . . In their opinion, modern capitalism was the best of all possible ways of organizing industries and services; and if only meddle-



some persons would refrain from interfering with its operations, the maximum social welfare as well as the maximum national wealth would be secured for the whole community.<sup>73</sup>

Herbert Spencer summarized the attitude of economic liberalism toward the Poor.

Sympathy with one in suffering suppresses, for the time being, remembrance of his transgressions. The feeling which vents itself in 'poor fellow!' on seeing one in agony, excludes the thought of 'bad fellow,' which might at another time arise. Naturally, then, if the wretched are unknown or but vaguely known, all the demerits they may have are ignored; and thus it happens that when, as just now, the miseries of the poor are depicted, they are thought of as the miseries of the deserving poor, instead of being thought of, as in large measure they should be, as the miseries of the undeserving poor. Those whose hardships are set forth in pamphlets and proclaimed in sermons and speeches which echo throughout society, are assumed to be all worthy souls, grievously wronged; and none of them are thought of as bearing the penalties of their own misdeeds . . .

[This position] takes for granted, first, that all suffering ought to be prevented, which is not true, much suffering is curative, and prevention of it is prevention of a remedy. In the second place, it takes for granted that every evil can be removed: the truth being that with the existing defects of human nature, many evils can only be thrust out of one place or form into another place or form—often being increased by the change.<sup>74</sup>

Articulate opinion regarding the majority of the population became a different thing when they were viewed not as 'The Poor' but as 'Labour.' The philosophy of individualism still operated—but with a difference.

'The coming of industry and the political emancipation of the middle class in England broke up the old unity based upon an accepted social and political hierarchy.'<sup>75</sup> The change set free the individual and by setting him free it isolated him. 'The process of isolation and separation . . . became in its turn a levelling process.'<sup>76</sup> The formerly tied-in man was becoming the interchangeable part which machine technology requires; the process of creating industrial Man-

chesters meant aggregating not so much laborers as persons, as labor-power—anonymous, heaped together, waiting to be employed. The middle-class attitude toward labor at the beginning of the 'eighties was an attitude toward this labor commodity. But as the earlier harmony of the estates gave way to harmony through competition, it was inevitable that the stress on competition should eventually make labor power aware of itself as laborers.\*

Beatrice Webb describes the prevalent attitude at the beginning of the 'eighties, in her first familiarity with the term 'labour' as she heard it in her father's conversation and read it in his reports:

'Water plentiful and labor docile,' 'The wages of labor are falling to their natural level,' 'To raise artificially the wage of labor is like forcing water up hill . . .' were phrases which puzzled me . . . Indeed I never visualized labor as separate men and women of different sorts and kinds.†

Again and again this attitude toward labor as a tool to be purchased at the lowest possible price and used was echoed by other employers:

The workmen are very much more difficult to manage at the present time than they are when wages are lower.‡

Sheffield was at one time a town which suffered very much from the action of trade unions, but I do not think it has done so to any marked extent during the past few years . . . the depression in trade has really brought about its own cure in that respect.‡

The rate of wages perhaps never can be perfectly satisfactory to the manufacturer; we always want them lower than we can get them.§

\* See Ch. vii, pp. 290-98.

† Testimony of Mr. Lindsay Wood, colliery owner and president of the Durham Coal Owners' Association, before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, *Digest of the Evidence*, Vol. xxxiv, 1892, p. 9.

‡ Testimony of Mr. Charles Balk, the Master Cutler of Sheffield before the Royal Commission on Depression, 20 January 1886, *Minutes of Evidence*, Part I, *Second Report*, Vol. xxi, p. 79.

§ Testimony of Mr. I. T. Smith, director and general manager of the Barrow Hematite Steel Company, Cumberland, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 17 December 1885, *ibid.* pp. 62 and 64.

This glaring contempt for all authority [involved in holding meetings in the quarters] and wilful disobedience to clear and definite orders, I at once saw could be dealt with but in one way, if any future discipline was to be maintained, . . . namely to lock the men out . . . I was able on December 9th to post notices offering work at the quarries . . . I repeated these notices offering work each month till March 1886, when the men and boys . . . applied for work under identically the same terms in all respects as offered them on December 9th . . .

*Ques.* You do not recognise the men's Association in any way, do you? . . . *Ans.* No, I do not.

*Ques.* In case of disputes do you allow only the man affected to appear? *Ans.* Yes. Any man affected. The men inside that portion of the quarries in which anything unsatisfactory occurs can at once ask to see me. . . .

Neither my employer or myself have the very least objection to seeing a Government Slate Quarry Inspector, visiting the Dinorwic Quarries, provided the said person be competent, free of narrow-mindedness and of all fads; but I will add that so far as concerns these quarries his time would, I consider be wasted, as the great object of my employer and myself is to have the Dinorwic Quarry worked as safely as the law of Nature permits . . .\*

In general the attitude toward labor was that everything was well when labor was hard-working and docile, and that unions were unobjectionable when they promoted harmony between employers and workers and did not make labor 'more difficult to control.' The Royal Commission on Labour summarized:

. . . the view has . . . been put forward . . . that the action and rules of trade unions have been in some respects prejudicial to the efficiency of production and to the industrial prosperity of the country . . .

\* Testimony of the Hon. W. W. Vivian, director and general manager of the Dinorwic Slate Quarries, at Llanberis, before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 26 July 1892, *Minutes of Evidence, Third Report*, Vol. xxxii, 1893, pp. 280, 281, 290, 292-3, 295, 283.

- That trade unions have a growing tendency to interfere with details of business, and so to take away that concentration of command which is necessary for successful management . . .
- That trade unions often misjudge the true position of affairs, and by ill-timed and excessive demands . . . discourage enterprise and further investment of capital . . .
- That though organisations may tend to diminish the frequency of industrial conflicts, they extend their range . . .
- That workmen with a powerful union behind them are apt to become too confident as to their position, and to think that they cannot be discharged or punished, and so are likely to become indolent, careless or insubordinate, especially in cases where the foremen are unionists with divided allegiance.<sup>78</sup>

The attitude of the dominant minority toward the majority underwent another shift when the majority were regarded not only as the Poor, and as Labour, but as the People.

Neither the atomism of economic liberalism nor the political changes which broke up the earlier feudal structure destroyed the class basis of British society. The British system was based upon the authority of a controlling class with the majority of the population expected to submit to it. Marx never stated more emphatically that the owners of the means of production used labor as a commodity and a tool than did the owners themselves, as is apparent from such statements as those quoted above. Marx never stated more clearly the theory of the State as an instrument of the ruling class than did opponents of the Second Reform Bill. The official Church of England supported or was allied with the dominant group.\* The educational system from the Ragged Schools to Oxford and Cambridge bred an authoritarian character structure, training people to be leaders and followers, dominators and dominated, people who had power and people who submitted to power.

But by the last quarter of the century it was apparent that

\* See Ch. VIII, especially pp. 308-13.

that power must be paid for to be held; the doctrine of 'Ransom' was in operation. An increasing number of people gave lip service to the concept of democracy, and the Reform Act of 1867, the Education Act of 1870, the Trade Union Acts of 1874-5 gave it tangible expression.\* The name of Marx was practically unknown in England at this time, but landed aristocrats united with prosperous industrialists in stating a theory of class struggle. The People might combine to take democracy seriously.

Through the material developments of the wonderful century, the people could communicate with each other as never before. Through the Education Acts beginning with the Act of 1870 they were able to have access to the printed word. Through the cheapening price and wider circulation of the press and the reporting of Parliamentary debates they were able to take advantage of the ability to read in the discussion of social questions. Through the Reform Act of 1867 the number of those who could register their opinions through the ballot had been increased by 938,427 (88 per cent), and with the Reform Act of 1884 it was to be further increased by 1,762,087 (a further 67 per cent).

The Preface to the 1872 edition of Bagehot's *English Constitution* gives ironical expression to the attitude of the ruling class toward the emergence of the People after the Reform Bill of 1867:

'They [the old electors] were not influenced by ideas, but by facts; not by things impalpable, but by things palpable. Not to put too fine a point upon it, they were influenced by rank and wealth . . . The electors only selected one or two wealthy men to carry out the schemes of one or two wealthy associations . . . the deference of the old electors to their betters was the only way in which our old system could be maintained . . . They were just competent to make a selection between two sets of superior ideas . . .

We have not enfranchised a class less needing to be guided by their betters than the old class; on the contrary, the new class

\* See Ch. v, especially pp. 156-7 and Ch. vi, pp. 205-9; 229-34.

needs it more . . . The real question is, Will they submit to it, will they defer in the same way to wealth and rank, and to the higher qualities of which these are the rough symbols and the common accompaniments . . .

The common, ordinary mind is quite unfit to fix for itself what political question it shall attend to: . . . statesmen have now especially a great responsibility. If they raise questions which will excite the lower orders of mankind; if they raise questions on which those orders are likely to be wrong; if they raise questions on which the interest of those orders is not identical with, or is antagonistic to, the whole interest of the state,—they will have done the greatest harm they can do . . . They will have suggested topics which will bind the poor as a class together; topics which will excite them against the rich . . .

In plain English, what I fear is that both our political parties will bid for the support of the workingman; that both of them will promise to do as he likes if he will only tell them what it is; that as he now holds the casting vote in our affairs, both parties will beg and pray him to give that vote to them . . . *Vox populi* will be *vox diaboli* if it is worked in that manner.

And on the other hand, my imagination conjures up a contrary danger. I can conceive that, questions *being* raised which if continually agitated would combine the workingmen as a class together . . . But in all cases it must be remembered that a political combination of the lower classes as such and for their own objects, is an evil of the first magnitude; that a permanent combination of them would make them (now that so many of them have the suffrage) supreme in the country; and their supremacy, in the state they now are, means the supremacy of ignorance over instruction and of numbers over knowledge. So long as they are not taught to act together, there is a chance of this being averted; and it can only be averted by the greatest wisdom and the greatest foresight in the higher classes.\*

The same fear was voiced by educational leaders in Royal Commission hearings:

*Ques.* You say that board schools are likely to favour socialism; . . . what do you mean by socialism?

\* Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, pp. 5-13. Cf. Ch. vi, pp. 196-200.

*Ans.* I mean the state of things in which there is not the respect for the classes above the children that I think there ought to be.\*

Lord Salisbury suggested one way of handling the new voters:

That is the mode of action we shall have to adopt in much of our legislation; if people ask for an undesirable thing, if it is very bad and very dangerous, refuse it; but if not, give it them, in order that they may learn by experience not to ask for the same thing again.<sup>79</sup>

In the late 'eighties Lady Dorothy Nevill described to Hyndman another method of averting the threat of the people:

. . . you will never succeed, at any rate in your own lifetime . . . The turn of the people will come some day. I see that quite as clearly as you do. But not yet, not yet. You will educate some of the working class, that is all you can hope to do for them. And when you have educated them we shall buy them, or, if we don't, the Liberals will . . .

Besides, we shall never offer any obstinate or bitter resistance to what is asked for. When your agitation becomes really serious we shall give way a little, and grant something of no great importance . . . Our object is to avoid any direct conflict in order to gain time . . . [after ten years] We shall meet you . . . and again surrender a point from which we all along meant to retire; but which we have defended with so much vigor that our resistance has seemed to be quite genuine. . . . Yet another ten years are thus put behind us, and once more you start afresh with . . . a somewhat disheartened and disintegrated array. Once more we meet you with the same tactics of partial surrender and pleasing procrastination . . . your great changes will not come yet, and in the meanwhile you will be engaged on a very thankless task indeed . . .<sup>80</sup>

The growing realization of the chasm between the theory that individualism produces social welfare for all and the actual condition of the people of England presented an in-

\* Testimony of George Henry Sizer, chairman of the School Attendance Committee of the Tending Hundred, Essex, before the Royal Commission on Education, 3 May 1887, *Minutes of Evidence, Third Report*, 1887, p. 99.

escapable problem of motivating the Poor. Property in the French Revolution and at other historical moments had been an instrument of liberty, but if for the majority of the people the hope of property or even subsistence became too remote, and liberty empty of this or any other meaning, something else must be supplied. Exhortations to diligence and thrift, and the power to keep Labour docile, might not serve for the People equipped with literacy and the ballot. Mallock's theory of dangling the sight and the hope of wealth before them might no longer be adequate; the early motivations of individual enterprise continued, but a supporting floor had to be put under some sections of the population in order for them to be raised high enough to believe that they even saw the remote goal of material reward. If the dominant class were to maintain their position they must not allow the illusion that the State was conducted in the interests of all to be too much challenged by the actual gap between upper-class wealth and the Poor. In this failure of nerve they gave ground in the form of social legislation.\* The Poor had become Labour and Labour had become the People, a power which could not be ignored.

Economic liberalism had attempted to harmonize the doctrines of the right of private property and of democratic egalitarianism through the belief that by energetically pursuing his own interest the individual was at the same time doing the utmost that the law of nature allowed to promote the general welfare. The two elements in Bentham's thinking had been united by submerging his belief in legislation for social welfare under his belief in economic freedom. In the middle years of the century protests on the part of authoritarian aristocrats like Sir Henry Maine and on the part of Defenders of the Poor like Carlyle and Dickens had been less heeded because of the fact of prosperity and the belief in automatic progress. In the later years of the century social philosophers themselves brought the conflicts into the open.

\* Cf. Ch. v, pp. 156-65.



John Stuart Mill was generally regarded by his contemporaries as the high priest of economic liberalism. Actually his writings, interpreted fully, place him with the modifiers of the doctrine rather than with its orthodox defenders. The war of ideas necessitated by the conflict implicit in economic liberalism, as in capitalist democracy, had gone on in Mill from his early years. Ever since the eighteen-twenties, when Coleridge and Comte had led Mill to enrich the simplicities of his Benthamite faith,<sup>81</sup> he had been wrestling with what he came to regard as 'the vital problem of the future,' that of 'the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual.'<sup>82</sup> He did not share the naive faith of the economic liberals that this problem would solve itself, nor of individualists and collectivists alike that the solution of the issue of freedom and authority could be found in having more of one and less of the other. He recognized that the problem could not be solved simply in quantitative terms, but demanded understanding of *kinds* of individual freedom and kinds of social controls. He wrote:

I am convinced that . . . the free action differs from the unfree . . . in the different order of motives which prompts them.<sup>83</sup>

Individual spontaneity is hardly recognized by the common modes of thinking as having any intrinsic worth, or deserving any regard on its own account.<sup>84</sup>

A State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes—will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished.<sup>85</sup>

But it is a historical irony that although for more than a generation Mill was the dominant influence in all departments of philosophic and political thought—politics, economics, ethics, psychology, and logic\*—this central issue

\* Cf. W. R. Sorley, *A History of English Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1920, p. 261. Bertrand Russell's mother, Kate Amberley, noted in her journal for 19 February 1865, that Mill was publishing five things: his book on Sir William Hamilton's philosophy, two articles in the *Westminster Review* on Comte, and a new edition of *Political Economy* for 7/6 and of *Lib-*

which he saw did not impress itself upon his time, nor did it alter in the public mind his position as symbol of orthodox individualism. Alfred Marshall stated in his preface to *Economics of Industry*, published in 1879, that it was written: 'to construct on the lines laid down in Mill's *Political Economy* a theory of value and wages and profits'; and *The Economist* in reviewing it endorsed both Mill and Marshall as exponents of the theory of natural law.\* Mill's *Liberty*, which Morley described as belonging to those rare books that after hostile criticism has done its best are still found to have somehow added a cubit to man's stature,<sup>86</sup> was for twenty years after its publication central in the thinking of men who set the patterns of English thought. But, as the *Wealth of Nations* was for more than a century read as a treatise on production, omitting Adam Smith's discussion of consumption as the end and aim of production, so Mill's *Liberty* was seen through a Benthamite-Ricardian screen. His discussion of 'individual spontaneity,' his warning against those who 'by dint of not following their own nature . . . have no nature to follow,'<sup>87</sup> his urging of 'strong feelings'<sup>88</sup> were ignored.

What Mill actually said challenged the finality of the facts of natural science and of the psychology of the market place as drastically as his teachings, in common with those of more orthodox Utilitarians, took issue with Protestant morality.

Mill placed his hopes and expectations not only in natural law but in the creative possibilities of human effort. As far from Spencer as from Hugh Bell, he regarded the law of nature not as something to which men must at their peril conform, but as a tracing of scientific sequences which they could understand and use. He differed from Spencer and Carlyle and Browning in thinking that nature was the umpire who could do no wrong, that even where natural law was opposed to men's interests it might be a desirable testing

erty for 1/6 for poor people. (Bertrand and Patricia Russell, *The Amberley Papers: The Letters and Diaries of Bertrand Russell's Parents*, New York, Norton, 1937, Vol. 1, p. 371.)

\* 28 February 1880, Vol. 38, Pt. 1, p. 259. Such reviews show no awareness of the conflict within Mill or of his trend toward socialism.

of character.<sup>80</sup> He was closer to Huxley, in believing that while the law of nature could be used by men it could in no wise be a guide to human conduct; that while society is a part of nature, it would be dissolved by a return to the natural state of simple warfare among individuals.<sup>80</sup> In the main body of his *Political Economy* Mill followed the accepted classical economic interpretation of natural law, but the exceptions to its operation he listed at the end were so extensive as to constitute a wholly different philosophy.<sup>81</sup> He stated that the lot of social classes was not fixed, that human wishes had validity independent of the laws of political economy, and that human nature has more richness and diversity than can be comprised in economic motives.

In the later editions of the *Political Economy* and in some of his last articles he made his views more explicit:

I confess I am not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on; that the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other's heels, which form the existing type of social life, are the most desirable lot of human kind, or anything but the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress.<sup>82</sup>

If, therefore, the choice were to be made between Communism with all its chances, and the present [1852] state of society with all its sufferings and injustices; if the institution of private property necessarily carried with it as a consequence, that the produce of labour should be apportioned as we now see it, almost in an inverse ratio to the labour—the largest portions to those who have never worked at all, the next largest to those whose work is almost nominal, and so in a descending scale, the remuneration dwindling as the work grows harder and more disagreeable, until the most fatiguing and exhausting bodily labour cannot count with certainty on being able to earn even the necessities of life—if this, or Communism, were the alternative, all the difficulties, great or small, of Communism would be but as dust in the balance.<sup>83</sup>

Until the present age, the institution of property in the shape in which it has been handed down from the past, had not, ex-

cept by a few speculative writers, been brought seriously into question, because the conflicts of the past have always been conflicts between classes, both of which had a stake in the existing constitution of property. It will not be possible to go on longer in this manner. When the discussion includes classes who have next to no property of their own . . . they will not allow anything to be taken for granted—certainly not the principle of private property, the legitimacy and utility of which are denied by many of the reasoners who look out from the standpoint of the working classes.<sup>94</sup>

The restraints of Communism would be freedom in comparison with the present condition of the majority of the human race.<sup>95</sup>

Mill went as far beyond the orthodox position in his interpretation of individual responsibility as in his attitude toward natural law. Protestant morality and Utilitarianism had agreed in holding the individual morally responsible for sacrificing present fulfilment for future goals and in a meagre definition of individual freedom. Mill repudiated the attitude toward human nature involved in both.

Of the ethics of the New Testament he said that:

Its ideal is negative rather than positive; passive rather than active, exalting Innocence rather than Nobleness; Abstinence from Evil, rather than energetic Pursuits of Good; in its precepts . . . 'thou shalt not' predominates unduly over 'thou shalt.' . . . It is essentially a doctrine of passive obedience; it inculcates submission to all authorities found established.<sup>96</sup>

He found Bentham's understanding of human nature and theory of ethics grotesquely inadequate:

[Mill felt that Bentham] knew little of human nature from his own experience, and had made no attempt to learn more from others. He was contemptuous of the speculations of those who had not employed his method . . . He entirely lacked the dramatic imagination 'whereby one mind understands a mind different from itself, and throws itself into the feelings of that other mind,' and wantonly dismissed as 'vague generalities' 'the whole unanalyzed . . . experience of the human race.' Thus he was

thrown back entirely upon his own experience, and that was the reverse of rich . . . 'Self-consciousness, that demon of the men of genius of our time, was never awakened in him . . . He saw, accordingly, in man, little but what the vulgarest eye can see; recognized no diversities of character but such as he who runs may read'

Consequently, 'the sense of *honor* and personal dignity—that feeling of personal exaltation and degradation which acts independently of other people's opinion, or even in defiance of it; the love of *beauty*, the passion of the artist, the love of *order*, or congruity . . . of consistency in all things and conformity to their end; the love of *power*, not in the limited form of power over other human beings, but abstract power, the power of making our volitions effectual; the love of action, the thirst for movement and activity,—none of these powerful constituents of human nature are thought worthy of a place among the *Springs of Action*.' Likewise, 'man is never recognized by him as a being capable of pursuing spiritual perfection as an end; of desiring, for its own sake, the conformity of his own character to his standard of excellence, without hope of good, or fear of evil, from other source than his own inward consciousness.' <sup>97</sup>

With a belief that natural law was a limitation and an instrument but not a guide for men, and that individual freedom was a positive goal to be approached, not a measure of absence of authority, Mill could not share the prevailing belief in automatic progress nor the assurances of science, classical economy, and Protestantism. His was the lonelier task of working outside a system. Through exploring completely the Benthamite categories he had discovered their inadequacies and gone beyond them. He recognized the complexity of human nature which is more than an exact science of morals, the inseparability of means and ends, and the fact that the quality and direction of life are of more significance than separate specific points along the way.

Although Mill's deviations from orthodox individualism were largely ignored, as the 'seventies turned into the 'eighties social philosophers were stating modifications of the doctrine at the same time that exceptions were multiply-

ing in practice. Thornton, followed by Mill, had repudiated the wage-fund theory. Cairnes was perhaps the first orthodox economist to deliver a frontal attack upon laissez-faire in general. 'The maxim of laissez-faire,' he declared, 'has no scientific basis whatever, but is at best a mere handy rule of practice.'<sup>88</sup> This was in 1870.

A more common tactic was a guarded qualification of the detailed application of economic individualism in the manner of Mill's 'exceptions.' It was the recognition of modification of economic liberalism in statements of doctrine that marked the 'eighties.\*

This modification was accomplished, in the first place, by saying that economic liberalism did not have to mean certain things which manifestly did not apply to the England of joint stock companies and widespread unemployment. Professor Sidgwick, writing in the mid 'eighties, made certain adaptations explicit. First: It is only independent human beings with whom economic science is concerned. Even the extremest advocate of laissez-faire, he said, did not extend it to the assumption that individuals are sufficiently alert and careful to look after their private interests as children.<sup>89</sup> Such a statement recognized assumptions implicit in British legislation since 1802, and it was made several years after the Employers' Liability Act had, for the first time, extended the concept of individuals unable to look after all their own interests to include grown men. Second: Sidgwick crossed a number of divides in asserting that the argument for laissez-faire is concerned with the production of wealth, not its distribution; that if we can find any mode of intervention which will reduce inequality without diminishing motives to self-help, this kind of intervention is not opposed to orthodox political economy; and he cited education as a form of intervention that aims to make people *more* self-helpful. Third: He pointed to instances where orthodox political economy does not apply, saying that the general economic presumption in favor of having social needs sup-

\* See Ch. v, pp. 174-89, for statements of alternate doctrines.

plied by private enterprise is absent where uniformity of action is required or where monopoly is too complete. He distinguished sharply between the concern of political economy, the effect on the wealth of the community caused by interference or non-interference, and the concern of the statesman for the physical or moral well-being of the community to which considerations of wealth are subordinate.<sup>100</sup> Sidgwick was described by Bernard Shaw as 'sitting on the fence in his inimitably placid way, gently eluding the attempts of Free Traders, Protectionists, Socialists, and individualists to classify him . . . but still, on the whole, and quite impartially, of course, nearer to Marx than to Bastiat.'<sup>101</sup>

Jevons went further both in stretching the old concepts to cover new conditions and in pointing out that exceptions to the laws of political economy do not invalidate them. In line with the first, he maintained that factory legislation confers rather than destroys rights and liberties, that the Factory and Workshop Act of 1878 should be regarded as the great charter of the working class. He ignored the fact that rights and liberties appear differently from the points of view of the different groups concerned. Citing exceptions to political economy, Jevons pointed to taxation which was in conflict with a strict interpretation of property rights, and to the work of courts of conciliation which decided many matters which, according to pure principles of political economy, ought to be left to supply and demand. He finally reached the point of saying that he conceived that the State was justified in passing any law, even in doing any single act which, without ulterior consequences, added to the sum total of human happiness, and that the liberty of the subject was only the means toward an end.<sup>102</sup> Thus, in contrast to Spencer's older individualism based on natural law, he represented a newer individualism based on social advantage.

In 1888 Cliffe Leslie was lamenting that great general principles, like that of freedom of contract, were now abandoned in a moment to promote a particular measure, per-

haps expedient or necessary in itself and defensible on special grounds, like the Irish Land Act.<sup>103</sup> But he, too, recognized the changing demands imposed by new conditions on economic science. Instead of the world of light, order, equality, and perfect organization, which orthodox political economy postulated, the commercial world was one of obscurity, confusion, haphazard, in which, amid much destruction and waste, there was by no means always a survival of the fittest, even though cunning were counted among the conditions of fitness; the fundamental laws of the economic world were still imperfectly known, and they could be fully known only by patient induction. Two conclusions, at least, could be drawn—that the economic world is still, in a great measure, an unknown one; and that to know it economists must explore it, as geographers have explored the world of physical geography.<sup>104</sup> Here science was called in not to support orthodox doctrines but to show the necessity and offer the means of going beyond them.

Cunningham had pointed out in 1879 that political economy is concerned only with giving us the rationale of commercial and industrial life as it exists today and that it does not, as a science, predict the possible course of changes.<sup>105</sup> And by the middle of the 'eighties Thorold Rogers was attempting to show why political economists were more occupied with defending the present than with charting the future:

The discontent which is felt very generally with the condition of modern society has been largely enhanced by the traditional attitude of political economy. In its beginnings, this, the youngest of the philosophies or sciences, was as severe on the existing order of things as any criticism of Lassalle or Marx . . . The work of Adam Smith is full of sharp criticism, of pungent epithets, of denunciations . . .

The next teacher of the science exercised . . . a most baleful influence over it. Ricardo was an acute and prosperous stockbroker . . .

The fact is, political economy . . . [was] falling into the hands of opulent persons . . . To such persons the phenomena



of the production of wealth were of supreme, of even exhausting importance. They troubled themselves very little . . . with . . . the agencies by which the distribution of wealth was assisted or impeded. They were more concerned with the manner in which the few got rich, no matter how, than with the causes which kept the many poor, however much they may have added to the process by which the few grew wealthy.<sup>106</sup>

Thus we find more and more exceptions being made to the 'natural laws of political economy,' as these laws were set aside in a particular case or in a new situation. Lord Salisbury in discussing the Water Companies Bill in 1885 did not think Parliament 'bound to continue a system which had sanitary evils and was injurious to the health of the population merely on account of a previous bargain having been made with the Companies by Parliament.'<sup>107</sup> Three years earlier he had said that he did not think the land policy of the government should be objected to simply because it interfered with freedom of contract.<sup>108</sup> The following year, in debating the Agricultural Holdings Bill, he made the bold statement that:

. . . freedom of contract . . . [is] not on a level with the Ten Commandments. One of the most elementary principles of English law is that the law will not sanction contracts which are contrary to morality or the interests of trade . . .<sup>109</sup>

He recognized that at times 'the policy of laissez-faire can no longer be pursued without disaster to the State,' and at such times he believed that 'the solidarity and unity of the Empire' was more important than the principle of laissez-faire.<sup>110</sup>

A further stage in adaptation of the philosophy of liberalism appeared with the point of view that new social regulations are simply ways of making the laws of political economy work. Leslie Stephen agreed with Professor Fawcett that there are no rules for the sphere of government except helping people to help themselves, but urged that such equality was only possible and desirable in so far as the lowest classes were lifted to a higher standard morally as well as

physically. Competition could be unequivocally beneficial only in an ideal society where we could make the best use of our abilities without the sense of others being crushed.<sup>111</sup>

And finally, we have discussion of laissez-faire in the terms that England had not abandoned laissez-faire because she never had it. John Rae, writing on socialism in the *Contemporary Review* in the latter part of the decade, said that the theory of laissez-faire had never been in England anything more than it was then, the plea of alarmed vested interests stealing an unwarranted and an unwelcome shelter under the aegis of economic science.\* He then went on, however, to contrast the English doctrine of political science favorably with socialism, because the former would limit the State's part in social reform to securing the essential conditions for all human living and because it recognizes that the best way of promoting social progress and prosperity is to multiply opportunities and incentives of capital and talent.<sup>112</sup>

Economic liberalism had been an adaptable philosophy with an amazing capacity to absorb all things into itself. By the theory that individual pursuit of gain would bring welfare for all it had sought to reconcile the profit seeking of the industrial revolution with the liberty and equality of the French Revolution. Through the doctrine that economic striving was an individual moral responsibility and that present pleasure should be sacrificed to future pleasure at the cost of labor and suffering, it had found common ground with the Protestant ethic. By assuming that society was modeled on the laws of natural science it found an ally in the Darwinian theory of evolution.

\* John Rae, 'State-Socialism,' *Contemporary Review*, August and September 1888, Vol. 54, pp. 224-45 and 378-92.

Cf. the statement in the Catholic *Tablet*: 'Those who unite with the Cardinal Archbishop in advocating State intervention in the social question do so on the implicit understanding that the "Political Economy" they are questioning is not sure, not fully ascertained, not distinctly proved. [The] vital question of central interest in our times [is] whether there has not been a grave misunderstanding on the part of a school for half a century accepted as orthodox . . . [The national economic question] is open . . . after a long theoretic silence.' (*Tablet*, 27 November 1886.)

But the last quarter of the century brought into the open certain conflicts that economic liberalism could not reconcile, certain problems that it could not escape.

1. The assumption of economic liberalism had been that if attention was given to production the problem of distribution of goods could take care of itself. Collection of statistics on production and trade and on banking followed closely on counts of population in the early years of the century. But it was not until the last decades of the century that statistics on wages and distribution of goods were thought necessary. Until then it was believed that any problems in distribution of goods could be solved by further rise in the production curve. Therefore, the function of government was to preserve freedom of private enterprise so that it could continue to raise the state of the technical arts, extend the area of economic activity, and increase the amount of goods produced. The 'eighties saw these assumptions sharply questioned. The assumption that increasingly adequate distribution automatically follows increasing production was challenged—by the depression, by shrinking of markets and increased foreign competition, by poverty.

2. The doctrine of free enterprise could no longer be reconciled with developing nationalism. England had found it possible to believe that there was no essential conflict between free trade and national unity. England as the leading industrial nation could set an example which Europe would follow. But when Europe did not follow but instead imposed embarrassing tariffs, and England's pre-eminent position was gone, nationalism changed from a spiritual tradition to 'a self-conscious pose . . . a creed to be taught . . . a business to be developed.'<sup>113</sup> This form of nationalism could not be developed on the principles of economic liberalism.

3. Economic liberalism could no longer exist as a self-contained philosophy detached from humanitarian feeling. It had been possible for individualism as a rational philosophy of life, congenial to the character structure developed by Protestantism and industry, to assume that there could be no human welfare on any other basis, and to exist side

by side with a humanitarianism, which was an incidental luxurious addition to the main business of life. Each intensified the other: <sup>114</sup> economic liberalism could be more uncompromising in its insistence on rational self-direction, common sense, and hard work because any other aspects of human nature could be taken care of on the side by sentiment. Humanitarianism could be somewhat irresponsible and incidental because it was clear that the main practical business of life was being dealt with under the precepts of economic liberalism. Tory philanthropy could further factory acts mitigating the lot of workers in certain specific industries without questioning or altering the structure of society. One could weep over *persons*, *Oliver Twists* or a ragged match girl, without altering one whit one's attitude on the important *things*, Poor Laws or rights of property or free trade. It was a permissive luxury for a society which was making gigantic strides in developing industry to acclaim or to denounce Carlyle or Ruskin or Maurice in its leisure hours. The forces of idealism in the national life—the forces making for reconsideration of social duties, for readjustment of social conceptions—were to a very large extent divorced from politics and from political creeds.

In the 'eighties, humanitarianism could no longer be kept apart as a luxury. Beatrice Webb speaks of the 'humanitarian upsurge of the 'eighties' as a new development, but it is more correct to say that the humanitarian feeling which had been peripheral was becoming central, and that social philosophy and social practice had to incorporate it at the core of belief and action. Dislike of human suffering was not new. But during most of the century it was believed that industrial advance with increased production would banish scarcity and eliminate poverty, thus diminishing suffering, as far as possible or desirable in human society. But the decline in assured prosperity and the inescapable fact of poverty as a large-scale urban phenomenon made it increasingly impossible to rest content with this belief.

4. The authoritarian character structure of leaders and followers, dominators and dominated, possessors and pos-

essed, fostered by the British way of life and tacitly sanctioned by economic liberalism, was incompatible with the rising concept of democracy.\* Industry itself as it had developed had less need for the virtues of hard work, caution, and thrift than for those of initiative, resourcefulness, and ability to carry on group planning. Implicit in democracy was the aim that all individuals in a society—not a selected class—should have the opportunity to exercise their initiative and to develop their own potentialities to the utmost. Mill saw clearly the coming change:

I cannot think that they [the laboring classes] will be permanently contented with the condition of labouring for wages as their ultimate state . . . when ideas of equality are daily spreading more widely among the poorer classes, and can no longer be checked by anything short of the entire suppression of printed discussion and even of freedom of speech, it is not to be expected that the division of the human race into two hereditary classes, employers and employed, can be permanently maintained.<sup>115</sup>

Economic liberalism had been an instrument through which the middle class had emancipated themselves from economic, political, and intellectual restrictions. Now it had become an instrument by means of which the united aristocracy and the middle-class industrialists were seeking to entrench themselves against the growing power of the People. But it was an instrument which had ceased to serve accurately even the purposes of the dominant group. Economic individualism had as little actual relevance to the world of the Railway Ring, employers' associations, joint stock companies, vast empire, and foreign competition as it did to the third of the population of London living below the poverty level. It was only when these facts of English life were ignored that it could be invoked with any seriousness. The rejection of group action in favor of individual action applied only to *State* action interfering with business enterprise; it was slurred over or by-passed in the case of group action by business enterprise. With the continued assump-

\* Cf. Ch. v, pp. 174-89.

tion of automatism and natural law as the basis for the life of the nation, faith in the natural order was being replaced in practice by increasing group planning.

Social philosophers as different as Spencer and Marshall interpreted the society of their day on the assumption that orderliness was essentially there, pre-fabricated; and social problems were viewed as making the best of the resources already at hand within the framework of existing institutions. England had made marvelous strides in the nineteenth century and it was difficult for men to see basic disorder in her way of life. But it was becoming manifest that order could not be relied upon as a built-in feature in the English scene. Then, asserted the dissenters, it was the task of Englishmen to create the kind of order which would come nearer to fulfilling human desires.

## IV. *Intruding Events*

THE thing most on people's lips in the early 'eighties was not growth of monopoly, or foreign competition, or wages or hours, or exceptions to economic liberalism, but the Depression.\* The lament of *The Times* on the gloomy opening of 1880 † was a reflection of six years of economic disorganization which was only then becoming acutely apparent and which was beginning to color the outlook of all groups of people.

Beales believes that the term 'depression' is unsuitable to describe this period, because the undeniable facts of falling prices and invasion of the home market constituted a depression only in relation to such things as Britain's earlier rapid economic development, the excited spasm of foreign loan-making in 1873, the industrialization of other countries, increasing productive efficiency, and rapid technological development rendering fixed capital obsolescent. ‡ But the impact of a frustrating occurrence must be measured in terms of the strength of confidence and expectation which it affects. It is against this faith and expectation, shared from the 'fifties to the 'seventies by all groups in England, that the role of the depression in speeding the demise of economic liberalism must be seen.§ Certainly the period of

\* Cf. Frederick J. Taggart, *Theory of History*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1925, on the function of 'intruding events' in social change.

† See Ch. I, p. 3.

‡ H. L. Beales, "The Great Depression" in Industry and Trade, *Economic History Review*, October 1934, Vol. v, pp. 65-75.

§ See Ch. II, pp. 45-7. Cf. a letter from Herbert Spencer to Alfred Russel Wallace dated 21 November 1885: 'During the past generation . . . a somewhat abnormal degree of prosperity [has] lasted long enough to . . . be

falling prices, falling profits, increased foreign competition, contracting opportunities for investment, was increasingly felt between 1873 and 1886 as 'the great depression.'

The years 1873 to 1896 were a period of continuously falling prices, divided into three slumps and two intervening recoveries. The peak of the good years was 1872, and the succeeding slump lasted until 1879; there followed three years of improvement, then a second spasm of depression from 1882 to 1886; four years of recovery, then a third slump from 1890 to 1896. Between 1874 and 1896 prices fell 40 per cent. After 1896 prices began to rise.<sup>1</sup>

Decline of profits in terms of actual return on investment was first felt acutely in agriculture and then reached textiles. The year 1883 saw extensive failures in the cotton trade; the liabilities of the head of the 'Cotton Corner' '. . . were estimated at more than half a million sterling.'<sup>2</sup> From 1883 on, the depression extended to the metal trades, engineering, and shipping. The Board of Trade Returns for 1884 showed that the tonnage of ships built on the Clyde dropped from 419,664 tons in 1883 to 296,854 in 1884, and on the Wear from 212,360 tons in 1883 to 99,424 in 1884, with resulting dislocations in employment.<sup>3</sup> The Royal Commission on Trade Depression in 1886 reported 'no profit at all' or 'meagre' profit in the shipping trade, iron and coal, textiles, and agriculture.<sup>4</sup>

During the late 'seventies there had been a general disposition to do away with the depression by talking normality and prosperity. Speakers in Parliament constantly pointed out occasional heartening signs and the unimportance of adverse portents. Escott in his *Fortnightly* editorials stressed the increase in railway receipts, savings bank deposits, and the consumption of certain staple goods to prove the unreality of any break in economic progress.<sup>5</sup> *The Economist* declared that 'even if it were true that since 1874 our industries have been losing ground, that would in itself afford no valid reason for a denunciation of free trade,<sup>6</sup> and offered mistaken for the normal condition.' (Wallace, *My Life*, New York, Dodd, Mead, Vol. II, p. 39.)



as proof against the existence of a depression the fact that, although money wages had been reduced between 1875 and 1881, real wages and the actual consumption of staple articles had increased.<sup>7</sup>

Early in 1880 *The Economist* recorded with apprehension a total of over 15,000 failures in both wholesale and retail trades in 1878 and of 16,637 in 1879.<sup>8</sup> The Queen's speech in the new Gladstone Parliament in 1880 recognized that 'the depression which has lately been perceived in the Revenue continues without abatement.'<sup>9</sup> By the opening of Parliament in 1883, despite a spurt of revival in '81 and '82, there remained no confidence anywhere. Lord Randolph Churchill, in his role as leader of the Fourth Party,\* attacked the Queen's speech for its omission of any discussion of 'the marked, continued, and apparently hopeless depression of trade in the country.'<sup>10</sup> Two years later the House of Lords demanded a Committee on the Depression of Trade with a purpose as defined by Lord Iddesleigh '... to ascertain what this depression is, and how it is working, and what is the probable outcome of the present state of things if nothing is done.'<sup>11</sup> Laissez-faire as a convenient philosophy for doing nothing when no one knew what should be done was being called into question. The Report of the Committee on the Depression in the following year was an important milestone not only in recognition of economic disorder but, also, in acceptance of some active governmental responsibility for promoting general welfare.

By the mid 'eighties Sir Robert Giffen had reversed the idea of the late 'seventies that no one was aware of economic decline, and declared that economic decline existed *only* in awareness of it. 'Depression,' he told the Royal Commission, 'means the state of the mind of the people engaged in business,'<sup>12</sup> though he added:

What I am suggesting is that depression could be defined in two ways. Subjectively it would mean the feeling of people in busi-

\* Cf. Ch. vi, pp. 209-16.

ness, and objectively it would probably involve either the diminution of business itself or of the profits of business.<sup>13</sup>

By the middle of the 'eighties the depression had woven itself into general consciousness. In 1883 the Marquis of Blandford, elder brother of Lord Randolph Churchill, outlining 'The Limits of English Revolution,' had said that 'The possibilities of revolutionary change occurring in this country depend upon two circumstances occurring simultaneously, the collapse of our trade . . . and the breaking up of our parliamentary system.'<sup>14</sup> Only two or three years later a number of competent observers thought that the first of these conditions had occurred; and, with the collapse and realignment of parties in 1886 over the Home Rule issue, many were inclined to believe that the second was at hand.

Contemporary analysis of the depression reflected all the current variations on economic liberalism. Diverse ways of seeing and ways of not seeing of different groups of people stood out clearly when focused upon the same body of facts.

The 'laws of political economy' were frequently invoked in their pure form. The depression, said Lord Salisbury, is dependent upon 'great natural and economic causes' and the remedy is not protection, but the ordinary working of economic laws. In discussing 'The Conditions of Industrial Prosperity' at the Industrial Remuneration Conference in 1885, W. H. Houldsworth, M.P., said:

The first condition which industry demands in order that it may live and grow is freedom—freedom to spring where it likes, to alter its course as it likes, to disappear if it likes. 'Noli me tangere' is the true password of industry. And to the thousand voices which from time to time press on us nostrums for the revival of dying trade, the only real and sensible answer is, 'Why can't you let it alone?'

The great law of supply and demand . . . is to trade what the law of gravitation is to matter . . . The instability and unsteadiness of trade are its best stimulant.<sup>15</sup>

Professor Marshall took the same nothing-can-or-need-be-done attitude. He was reported as saying that:

There was a great temptation to exaggerate the misery around us . . . The times had not been so much out of joint as some persons imagined, who thought that, if wealth were divided equally, all would be rich . . . If they were to divide the wealth equally, the average per head would be only £36 8s. for England and Wales . . . If they read history they would find that, out of eighty-four years in the present century, there had been [only] about fourteen in which there was no murmur of depression in industry.<sup>16</sup>

It was a short step from 'natural law' to 'over-production' as a cause of depression, and in some form this appeared in every analysis of depression in every trade. Over-production was a natural phenomenon which recurred, like good and bad seasons; men might recognize it, but they could do very little to prevent it or to alter its consequences. This point of view was expressed repeatedly before the Royal Commission on the Depression:

*Ques.* What are the causes to which you attribute the falling off in the profits of the carrying trade?

*Ans.* I attribute it principally to the over-production of steam tonnage . . . caused principally by the abnormal credit that was given by both builders and bankers to anyone who wanted it to invest . . . during the very prosperous times.\*

Over-production was still a concern of the Royal Commission on Labour in the 'nineties:

*Ques.* Would the owners have any objection to reducing the hours of boys' work if it were possible to do so?

*Ans.* If it were possible to do so, we should be very glad to do it, but I see no possibility of doing it.

*Ques.* What is the objection to a treble shift of men and a double shift of boys?

*Ans.* . . . I think a great objection would be on the part of the men, that it would lead to a very large increase in the out-put of coal . . .†

\* Testimony of Arthur Scholefield representing the North of England Steamship Owners' Association before the Royal Commission on Depression, 31 March 1886, *Third Report*, p. 133.

† Testimony of Mr. Frank Stobart, agent of Lord Durham in charge of his 'considerable collieries' in the county of Durham, before Group 'A' of the

A further implication of the natural-law theory was that any interference with free enterprise—whether by legislation or by combinations of workers—produced depression:

Another cause [of depression] has been the Limited Liability Act . . . Instead of investors being required to have a certain amount of capital, it has . . . enabled those who had never been in steam shipping before to go into that industry.<sup>17</sup>

The immediate effect of the Mines Act [of 1872] was to check production; . . . and that brought about a very high range of prices for fuel in 1873 and 1874, and that in its turn induced a very large outlay in reopening mines which had been disused for some time on the one hand, and an immense amount of capital was expended in opening new mines on the other hand; and it was not long before those two points brought up the production of coal to a greater amount than the demand for it, and the prices of fuel have been falling pretty nearly ever since.\*

I think it [improving the mining industry] depends entirely upon the question of the selling price and the cost. Of course, if the selling price remains low, then the items of cost must be reduced very much . . . I should suggest a reduction all round; royalties, rates, labour, railway carriage, and everything.†

The public were very philanthropic about passing the Mines Regulation Act, but they do not care to pay for it, and it comes out of the coalowners' pockets.‡

*Ques.* Do you consider that the workmen are getting a greater share than they should?

Royal Commission on Labour, 23 July 1891, *Minutes of Evidence, First Report*, Vol. xxiv, 1892, pp. 115-16.

\* Testimony of Mr. Alfred Hewlett, managing director of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 8 April 1886, *Minutes of Evidence, Part 1, Second Report*, Vol. xxi, p. 195.

† Testimony of Mr. George Baker Foister, appearing on behalf of the Northumberland Coal Trade Association, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 7 April, 1886, *Third Report*, Vol. xxiii, p. 185.

‡ Testimony of Mr. John Bell Simpson, representing the Durham Coal Trade Association, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 14 April 1886, *ibid.* p. 207.

*Ans.* The workmen are getting it all, and the iron manufacturer is getting none. If you ask me whether the men are making unreasonably high wages, I say, as a rule they are not . . . \*

I consider that the trades unions in Sheffield hamper trade, and keep up the rate of wages abnormally, and keep up the price of labour more than it would be if there were not trades unions; and of course that handicaps the Sheffield manufacturer considerably against foreign competition.†

Furthermore, natural law could operate only if other countries as well as England obeyed it; their recalcitrance resulted in 'unfair foreign competition.' The fear of developing industries on the continent and in America and protests against the use of trade bounties and other restrictions appeared repeatedly in evidence before the Royal Commission on the Depression and the Commission on Labour:

The preference . . . or the bonus, which in many cases has been given to foreign ports against London by the shipowners . . . especially applies to the China trade . . . natural causes are quite strong enough to injure the London trade . . . without the acceleration of it by these differential rates of freight.‡

Our trade is extremely competitive . . . with foreign countries . . . We have to compete with continental people . . . Their wages for fitters are about  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  per hour . . . and we pay about  $6\frac{1}{2}d.$  per hour. Now, if our good friends, the trades unions, could equalise those rates a little, we should be delighted to go to eight hours or to pay more money; but while we have to compete with that, and whilst those people do what they do, buy our machinery, make their drawings of it . . . copy it, we are in a very difficult position for holding the trade.§

\* Testimony of Sir Lowthian Bell, Bart., F.R.S., president of the Iron Trade Association of Great Britain, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 27 January 1886, *Minutes of Evidence*, Part 1, *Second Report*, Vol. xxi, p. 122.

† Testimony of James Willis Dixon before the Royal Commission on Depression, 27 October 1885, *ibid.* pp. 20-21.

‡ Testimony of Charles E. Collyer, a produce broker in London, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 25 March 1886, *Third Report*, Vol. xxiii, pp. 127 and 131.

§ Testimony of Reginald Wigram of the Iron Trades Employers' Association before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 27 July 1892, *Minutes of Evidence*, *Third Report*, Vol. xxxii, 1893, p. 355.

*Ques.* What causes do you assign for the depression in the sugar trade?

*Ans.* The bounties which are allowed by the continental nations, and latterly by America upon sugar which is brought into this country.\*

I believe that the general depression of trade from which we are suffering is in consequence of having lost nearly all our old foreign markets. We used to supply America very largely; we used to supply Germany, and we used to supply France . . . our customers have ceased to be customers, and in some instances they have become competitors.†

Mr. Charles M. Kennedy, head of the Commercial Department of the Foreign Office protested against differential treatment of British goods in Spain and elsewhere, and deplored the lack of adaptability of British manufacturers to the 'tastes and wishes' of foreign markets.<sup>18</sup>

'Unfair competition,' as a result of shipping bounties given by Germany and other foreign countries to steamers trading with China and Australia, brought forth frequent protests. Mr. William Price, a London shipowner, protested: 'they want to rob the British shipowner of his trade by any means in their power'; he further blamed the British Government for enhancing the disadvantage of the British trader by the Plimsoll Act and other legislative restrictions.<sup>19</sup>

Free trade was both blamed for the depression and extolled as a way out. Free trade in the face of foreign tariffs and bounties was deplored; while, on the other hand, any interference with the free flow of trade whether from 'government interference with production and distribution' or from 'trade unions' was regarded as leading directly to depression.<sup>20</sup>

\* Testimony of Sir George Chambers, representing also the West India proprietors and merchants in London and Glasgow, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 16 April 1886, *Minutes of Evidence*, Part 1, *Second Report*, Vol. xxi, p. 230.

† Testimony of Mr. John D. Ellis, chairman of John Brown and Co. and of the South Yorkshire Coal Association (in heavy iron and steel trades for thirty years, coal mining for twelve years), before the Royal Commission on Depression, 21 January 1886, *ibid.* p. 99.

*The Economist* throughout this period argued against using the depression to attack free trade and against 'the wide-spread spirit of discontent' among the working class. Alfred Marshall protested against exaggeration of the unfortunate effects of the depression itself:

I agree with the general opinion that a steady upward tendency in general prices conduces a little more to the general well-being than does a tendency downwards, because it keeps industry somewhat better employed. But on the other hand, people of all classes, and especially of the working classes, spend their incomes more wisely when prices and money-wages are falling, and they think themselves worse off than they are, than when a rise of prices and money-wages leads them to exaggerate their real incomes and to be careless about their expenditure. So that, on the whole, I think there is much less difference than is generally supposed between the net benefits of periods of rising and falling prices. It is doubtful whether the last 10 years, which are regarded as years of depression . . . have not, on the whole conducted more to solid progress and true happiness than the alternations of feverish activity and painful retrogression which have characterised every preceding decade of this century.\*

This complacent attitude toward the depression, however, required the remoteness of Cambridge. There was a growing feeling, as reflected in the Industrial Remuneration Congress and the Royal Commission on the Depression, that piecemeal solutions could be suggested, but that current theories left the real problem untouched: Free trade was the proper policy, *but* foreign industrial developments and tariffs undercut British trade; industrial expansion should be unlimited *but* over-expansion brought falling prices, no profits, and panic; wages were not high enough in terms of workers' needs *but* they were too high to allow profits; every business should be left free to make as much as it could *but* railway rates cut into industrial prosperity and mine-owners' royalties interfered with mining profits. More facts could be found and more power given to science, but vari-

\* Alfred Marshall, answer to the Royal Commission on Depression, dated at Cambridge, 27 May 1886, Appendix C, *Third Report*, Vol. XXIII, p. 422.

ous Royal Commissions showed that the difficulty seemed to be not so much with the facts as with their interpretation. Interpretations on the old lines did not answer. The question was becoming not whether any interference with natural law was allowable, but what interferences should be made and who should make them.

Certain explicit suggestions along these lines were offered. Undeveloped countries, colonies in particular, could be further used:

The Germans . . . are making iron on terms which will preclude the possibility of our sending iron there against them, excepting under very exceptional circumstances as to freights, &c . . .

It appears to me . . . that the most promising fields of enterprise would be in Indian possessions . . . in Australia, and . . . China. Whether this can be facilitated by diplomatic action is a subject the Commission will perhaps be better judges [sic] than I can pretend to be.\*

My idea is that no help can be given to trade except by utilising our colonies . . . I think we ought to go further and endeavour to arrange federation with our colonies, in fact, to have an equivalent to the Zollverein with them.

*Ques.* In the absence of anything of the kind, do you see any reason to expect that India will develop her railway system, for instance, any more rapidly in the future, in comparison with the development in this country, than she has done in the past?

*Ans.* I fancy India will develop very much faster relatively than this country; but I consider that a scheme of federation would increase the development.†

*Ques.* What countries are most promising now for British trade?

*Ans.* Undoubtedly India is the best of all. On India we rely, and if we lose India, Lancashire is practically ruined.

\* Testimony of Sir Lowthian Bell before the Royal Commission on Depression, 27 January 1886, loc. cit.

† Testimony of T. E. Vickers, in the crucible bar and sheet steel trade and in the manufacture of steel for ordnance, marine, and locomotive work, also a director of a colliery in South Yorkshire, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 21 January 1886, *Minutes of Evidence*, Part 1, *Second Report*, pp. 108-9.



*Ques.* Have you much competition in India itself from Indian hand-loom manufacturers?

*Ans.* I believe that the quantity of hand-loom work is very much less than it used to be, but still in coarse counts . . . it is still possible for hand-loom weavers to make coarse open goods to successfully compete against power-loom made goods. . . I mean places, say 20 miles from any town 200 or 300 miles away from any big port.

*Ques.* Can you compete with . . . [Indian mills] in their own country?

*Ans.* Under some conditions we could more than compete; we could beat them altogether. For instance, the Bombay and other mills, we could beat easily if they were under the same humane restrictions that we possess in England . . .

*Ques.* Then you do look upon the competition of those mills at Bombay and elsewhere in India as a serious matter?

*Ans.* I think it is one of the most serious matters for the consideration of the cotton trade of Lancashire if it is to be carried on without any restrictions as to the hours of labor or any restriction as to the employment of women and children . . .

It is greatly to be desired that a Customs' union or Zollverein should be formed between England and India and our Colonies, and so retain amongst them the utmost possible extent of business relations.\*

Industrialists could be given more power:

*Ques.* Do you think that anything more might be done by the Government in promoting trade?

*Ans.* In the first place, the Government are now recognising the various Chambers of Commerce . . . It will probably be found, as it is in Manchester, that those Chambers of Commerce consist mostly of other than the manufacturing class. For example, in the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, I believe that three-fourths of them are neither spinners nor manufacturers, and it would be decidedly advantageous to get in all manufacturing towns a great preponderance of manufacturers upon such Chambers of Commerce.†

\* Testimony of Thomas Stuttard, member of the firm of James Stuttard and Sons, cotton spinners, Albert Mill, Swinton, near Manchester, before the Royal Commission on Depression, 11 February 1886, *ibid.* pp. 168-70.

† *Ibid.* p. 170.

Against the easy optimism of the mid-nineteenth century, the early trade unions, the Chartists, the Christian Socialists had in vain asserted the claims of the submerged majority. As long as the controlling groups in the community remained prosperous, it was possible to maintain, even in the face of apparent contradictions, that the welfare of other groups hung upon it, and that any change in the policy of nominal freedom for all would jeopardize even the present well-being of all. But when that well-being began to fall away from even the most prosperous group, the fiction became less plausible and there was less reason for maintaining it. The depression was too big to be explained away or covered by a piling up of 'exceptions.' British business men were taking stock of their position to the extent of urging extension of power of business to plan for production and exploitation of colonies and to control legislative and labor interference. Individualism was not enough.

The land question was another issue which could not be evaded. It brought out all shades of opinion on individualism and government intervention.

Land reform epitomized proposals pointing toward collectivism urged in the name of laissez-faire. State interference with land owning and cultivation was tolerated long before similar interference with industry was considered a possibility. On the question of ownership and use of land, individualists as orthodox as Herbert Spencer and mavericks who raised as many questions as Alfred Russel Wallace \* found themselves agreeing that men could not adequately provide for their own interests. A ground swell of agitation for land reform had been growing since the 'thirties or 'forties and by the early 'eighties no question, except what to do about

\* Alfred Russel Wallace quotes a letter from Spencer written on 25 April 1881, in which Spencer expressed full sympathy with 'the general aims of your proposed Land Nationalization Society,' although, says Wallace, 'only ten years later . . . the writer of this letter . . . so far changed his opinions as to arrive . . . at the conclusion . . . "that individual ownership, subject to State suzerainty, should be maintained."' (*My Life*, Vol. II, pp. 27 and 29.)

Ireland, drew more attention in public discussion—and the question of Ireland was largely a question of the land.

In reviewing books on 'Social Philosophy' in 1884 John Rae wrote that

The most active leaven of the present social movement . . . is really the land question, the rapidly ripening conviction that our land system lies in one way or another very near the root of many of our social evils . . .<sup>21</sup>

Four years later he asserted again that 'in this country socialist notions always crop up out of the land.'<sup>22</sup>

Why did a philosophy of economic liberalism seem more obviously inadequate in regard to the land? And how did proponents of land reform justify themselves in formulating ideas of social interference?

Concentration of land ownership had preceded concentration of ownership' in other forms of capital. Although the process of enclosing land proceeded at a diminished rate in the mid-nineteenth century, the characteristic features of the English land system had become by this time large holdings with a tendency to increase in size, concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of landed proprietors and farmed by a group of tenants who had no clear rights to the fruits of their labor.\*

Thus the third quarter of the nineteenth century saw two main legal problems in regard to ownership and cultivation of land: (1) the survival of the old restrictive laws governing transfer of landed property—family settlements which blocked sales and the law of primogeniture in cases of intestacy; and (2) the fact that legislation was based upon land owning instead of upon tenant-farmer rights, although tenants did the bulk of the actual farming. This situation could plausibly be interpreted as one not of laissez-faire but as calling for removal of restrictions. Therefore, it could be argued that land reform would serve as a reinforcement of individual economic freedom rather than as an example of state interference. The fact that during the third quarter of

\* See Ch. II, pp. 24-8.

the century agricultural profits declined more rapidly than industrial profits facilitated this line of reasoning. Demands for free exchange of land, on pure laissez-faire grounds, led imperceptibly into demands for state guarantee of these rights, and finally for state ownership.

Furthermore, as tenant replaced owner, there was a persistent tradition of the stake of the farmer in the fruits of his labor, which did not apply with equal force to the factory worker replacing the independent artisan. As the small business man at the present time can become a figure in whose name state control is both invoked and resisted, so in the 'seventies and 'eighties the tenant farmer was a person and a symbol for whose sake state regulation and control could be applied in the name of freedom. As it is possible now to advocate state regulation in support of individual enterprise as opposed to monopoly, so then land became an issue on which reforms in the direction of socialization could be effected on laissez-faire principles.

*The Economist*, certainly no easy advocate of paternalism, supported regulation of tenant rights in the name of laissez-faire:

No industry can be permanently prosperous so long as the law artificially discourages the application to it of the capital which it could profitably absorb. This is the defect in the existing land laws of Great Britain . . . Ever since the reign of Edward I it has been a presumption of English law that when the tenant's occupation [has come to an] end, not only the land, but everything which he has put into or fixed upon it, belongs . . . to the landlord . . .

. . . So long, then, as the occupation and ownership of the land are in different hands, the legal recognition of tenant-right . . . as a necessary incident to every contract of tenancy, appears to be the first step which must be taken if British agriculture is to be put on a sound industrial basis.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the early 'eighties *The Economist* maintained this position. Artificial barriers needed to be removed to allow capital to flow freely into the land. An obvious line of easement lay through relaxation of restrictions on the trans-

fer and leasing of land inherited from medieval times. In 1856 a law had been passed giving to a tenant for life the power to make a lease extending beyond his own lifetime. In 1877 the further step was taken of reversing the old presumption against leases and allowing leases to be granted unless especially forbidden in the settlement. And finally in 1882 tenants for life were given as much freedom in using the land advantageously as was possible without abolishing settlements entirely. The Agricultural Holdings Act of 1883 legalized compensation for tenants' improvements. The fact that these provisions marked a genuine departure from laissez-faire ideas appears from the protests of a contemporary that Parliament no longer trusted the farmers to take care of themselves.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time there was growing up a definite belief that removal of legal restrictions in regard to the land was not enough. Ricardo had laid the foundation of the later arguments of the land reformers by his insistence upon rent as an unearned increment which served only to enrich the landlords; but he believed that all that was necessary was to remove any restrictions upon the exchange and use of land and allow the laws of laissez-faire to operate. Mill and others elaborated the argument by saying that, if rent were unearned, it was proper for the State to confiscate it by taxation, a doctrine which could lead easily to single tax or to state ownership of land. Mill argued:

This would not properly be taking anything from anybody; it would merely be applying an accession of wealth, created by circumstance, to the benefit of society, instead of allowing it to become an unearned appendage to the riches of a particular class.<sup>25</sup>

In 1870 Mill gave practical expression to his views through the formation of the Land Tenure Reform Association, with Thorold Rogers, John Morley, Sir Henry Fawcett, Cairnes, Cliffe Leslie, Sir Charles Dilke, Alfred Russel Wallace, and six members of the International Working

Men's Association among its members. This Association went so far as to advocate state control of the land.

By 1881 the *Annual Register* thought it important to call attention to the publication of a new edition of *Systems of Land Tenure in Various Countries* issued under the sanction of the Cobden Club at the suggestion of Mr. Gladstone.<sup>26</sup> Two years later the *Annual Register* noted that on October 30 'Mr. Michael Davitt addressed a crowded meeting at St. James's Hall on "Land for the People." His speech was well received, and the reception accorded to the speaker was most enthusiastic.'<sup>27</sup>

The development of Alfred Russel Wallace's thinking may be taken as characteristic of the changes going on in the minds of many. In his autobiography he wrote:

The question of land-nationalization continued . . . to occupy my mind, but having become strongly impressed by the teachings of Spencer, Mill, and other writers as to the necessity of restricting rather than extending State agency . . . I did not attempt to write further upon the subject. But when the topic of Irish landlordism became very prominent in the year 1879-1880, an idea occurred to me which seemed to entirely obviate all the practical difficulties . . .

. . . The suggestion which rendered land-nationalization practicable was that while, under certain conditions stated, all land would gradually revert to the State, what is termed in Ireland the *tenant-right* and in England the *improvements* . . . would remain his property and be paid for by the new state-tenants at a fair valuation.<sup>28</sup>

In 1880 he made a declaration the precise converse of Auberon Herbert's statement that there should be no interference by the State even for the preservation of life, health, and education: \*

My proposal is mainly founded upon a very simple proposition . . . that whatever acts may be done by an individual without injustice or without infringing any rights which others possess or are entitled to claim in law or equity, then acts of a similar nature may be done by the State, also without injustice.<sup>29</sup>

\* See Ch. III, p. 74.

He noted in this connection that, despite Spencer's influence on him in the direction of individualism, it was Spencer's *Social Statics* which first made him realize 'the immorality and impolicy of private property in land.'<sup>80</sup>

The Land Nationalization Society initiated by Wallace was active for at least a quarter of a century and, in Wallace's view, achieved the conversion of the best organized trade unions to the view that abolition of land monopoly is at the root of all social reform.<sup>81</sup> This society favored abolishing all private property in land, but with compensation to dispossessed landowners to an extent not exceeding the net income they derived from the land. The Land Restoration League<sup>82</sup> and the Land Reform Union, associated with the Guild of St. Matthew,<sup>83</sup> advocated state appropriation of land values through increasing taxation.

Contemporaneous with the land-nationalization movement and gaining in strength during the latter part of the 'eighties was the agitation for small holdings. This represented, also, an awareness of the need for land reform and was a kind of backwash from the movement toward socialization of the land, in the form of an enhanced individualism. It was typified by Jesse Collings's recurrent proposals in Parliament for 'three acres and a cow,' which were eventually embodied in the Small Holdings Act of 1892.

Frederic Harrison at the Industrial Remuneration Conference in 1885 argued for peasant holdings, despite his belief in the growing concentration of capital, on the ground that:

I see social and moral evils of the worst kind in any system which severs (as ours does) the ownership of the soil from any responsibility to superintend its cultivation. . . . These evils, however, can be remedied by a reform of the land laws, by abolishing all the legal and social privileges peculiar to the ownership of land, and by a resolute scheme of land taxation.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the fact that land reform could be urged in the name of freedom, laissez-faire in all its austerity was asserted in defense of existing conditions. The Duke of Argyll, with his 170,000 acres, was if not actually accepted as the spokes-

man of the landlords, at least regarded as the target of those who were urging reform. In 1881 he resigned the office of Lord Privy Seal, saying that his sole difficulty with his colleagues was over the Land Bill.<sup>35</sup> He repeatedly asserted in the House of Lords and elsewhere that individual freedom is the rule; every attempt to interfere with it must make out its own case of expediency or necessity. The conditions on which one man may hire land from another are governed by *price*. The general rule is *caveat emptor*—each man to look after himself. He denied the justice of giving the tenant the full value of his improvements. He insisted that the interests of landlords and of 'the people' are in the long run identical, and ignored any short run antagonisms.<sup>36</sup>

If a poor man, by dint of great industry and self-denial, saves enough to buy a bit of land, and to equip it with all the necessary apparatus of cultivation, he ought to be equally free to cultivate that land himself, or to let it out on hire . . . precisely as he may find most suitable for himself and for his family. But how can he do this when the State steps in and tells him that if he ventures to let it on hire his tenant must become part owner with himself, that the bargain he makes with him must be subject to revision from time to time by some 'Court' . . . ?

. . . Experience as well as all reasoning is against any legislative attempt to regulate the price of anything, whether to diminish or to increase it . . .<sup>37</sup>

Under freedom of contract these questions [the Three F's: Fair Rent, Fixity of Tenure, Freedom of Sale] never arise, because they are answered by a self-regulating operation. The 'full value' of a tenant's improvements is that amount and that duration of the return for which he chooses to stipulate.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time, Lord Stanley of Alderley, owner of 10,791 acres,<sup>39</sup> was appealing in the *Fortnightly Review* for individual liberty in the name of expediency and efficiency.

Some of the extreme philosophers propose that the right of the individual to hold land should be limited in extent; . . . Considering that the great estates are the best managed and the lowest rented . . . few farmers will agree with them . . . the



general feeling is that large country houses are beneficial. They are a source of enjoyment to many others besides their owners; they are [centres of] . . . culture in rural districts, and centres of expenditure beneficial to their neighborhood . . . Land is asked to keep and educate the poor; . . . I believe our legislators have too much good sense to swallow such ideas.\*

Bonamy Price argued that land is by nature an exception to the laws of political economy.

In the letting of land competition can never come fully into play to the exclusion of all other motives.

To suppose that in buying and selling, regard for money is always the sole or dominant consideration is to make Political Economy untrue to human nature.<sup>40</sup>

He also pointed out that, in defiance of the Ricardian law of marginal cultivation, there is actually immense difference of rent in different localities and even in the same region for equally fertile land belonging to different owners.

Thorold Rogers, in the mid 'eighties, made a characteristic plea for moderate reform, opposing nationalization as violating confidence in contracts, but saying that the vested interests and attitudes of landlords have invited proposals for nationalization.

The two Houses of Parliament are keenly alive to the interest of the landowner and to the duty of robbing others on his behalf. In the last Parliament the Tory Government transferred permanent charges of a million and a half annually from the landowners to the general body of taxpayers. In the present Parliament the landowners have been strong enough to plunder the same body of persons—i.e. the mass of the English people—of £200,000 a year for the purpose of maintaining roads . . . without which agricultural land would be valueless, and the costs of which therefore should be borne . . . by landowners . . .

. . . As long as landowners cling to anti-social expedients, such as primogeniture, the power of strict settlement, and the conveyance of land by secret deeds unquestionably are, so long

\* Baron Stanley of Alderley, 'Radical Theorists on Land,' *Fortnightly Review*, 1 March 1885, Vol. 45, pp. 297-308. Cf. Mallock's statement on the functions of wealth, Ch. III.

will those who would advocate the maintenance of private property in land be disabled from defending what is legitimate, and must leave the field to those who assail the institution itself.

The English working man is not . . . at war with the organization of society . . . Only he is shaky about the land, and unless reform is speedy, there is risk that he may formulate his discontent.<sup>41</sup>

At about the same time Brooke Lambert, writing on the outcast poor, was insisting that unless the workers received some satisfaction on the land question, they would turn to socialism and demand more drastic social change:

The Nationalization of Land question may take a form for which some are little prepared. Since the days of Chartism nothing has so stirred the working classes.<sup>42</sup>

But England never made even a temporary recovery from agricultural as she did from industrial depression. No basic land reform was carried out. Instead the land question became a focus of discontent, part of the ferment which resulted in socialist agitation, the new unionism, and the Labour Party of the 'nineties.

The land question, acute in England, was in Ireland inescapable. The crucial form which certain social problems assumed in Ireland had repeatedly made Ireland an incitement to change in England. In the 'eighties the urgency of the Irish land crisis served to spot-light the land problem in England as well as the fact that economic liberalism offered no solution to it.

Ireland had recurrently been a sore in the side of England. In the mid 'eighties an article in the *Quarterly Review* lamented:

Why is an Ireland the special lot of this country, so philanthropic, so popular and liberal in its sentiments of government, so anxious to divest its policy of even the suspicion of egotism? . . . There is much in the past history of Ireland that would be horrible if it took place at the present day; but there is nothing in it monstrous or singular—nothing worse than has been done

elsewhere by invaders in a conquered province . . . And yet the possession of an Ireland is our peculiar punishment, our unique affliction, among a family of nations. What crime have we committed, with what peculiar vice is our national character chargeable, that this chastisement should have befallen us? <sup>43</sup>

The extent of anti-Irish feeling among certain groups in England is suggested by Tillett's account of 'a work mate, a man called Fleming, whose name was really Flanagan, but who had adopted the alias during the anti-Irish time, when the advertisement "No Irish need apply" was a common sight.' <sup>44</sup>

Political and economic uprisings in Ireland and their repression by England had been recurrent from the time of the Reformation. In the mid-century all British classes and parties had been singularly uninformed and indifferent about Ireland. Since the famine of the 'forties little had been heard of the stricken island and Englishmen vaguely hoped that emigration was solving her remote problems. This indifference was shattered in the 'sixties by the Fenian movement with its demands for a republic and the replacement of the tenant system of agriculture by small peasant holdings. Again Ireland began to play the role of thorn in the flesh to England.

As India in the twentieth century has more than once served as a gratuitous annoyance to England at a highly inopportune time, so in the late nineteenth century Ireland frequently came to the fore at a time when England was outraged that such a disturbance should interfere with major national or imperial concerns. What differences would there have been in the course of the 'eighties if England had not been forced to divert her attention to Ireland, and if the necessity of finding some way out of the Irish situation had not forced solution of questions which in England could be allowed to drift? As early as 1867 Marx wrote to Engels that the future of the working class in England hung upon a solution of the Irish question. <sup>45</sup>

The problem of Ireland centered in the problem of the land. In Ireland about half the country was owned by 700

persons; the landlord was a monopolist—a monopolist who differed in religion from his tenant, who, living out of the country, had little or no idea of social obligations; and who before 1874 was the sole representative of Ireland in the British Parliament.<sup>46</sup> The Duke of Argyll could cover many pages in contemporary journals maintaining that all was well with the land in England, and there were endless debates in Parliament whether the situation called for action. In regard to Ireland there was no room for debate; there could be no doubt that something must be done.

Even *Punch*, in January 1880, represented England succoring Ireland with the caption

You've troubles enough without *Starvation*.  
That I can, and *Will Help*.

Ireland had always been regarded as an exception covered by no rules. It was no reflection on the principles of political economy that they could not be stretched to cover the Irish situation. What sane principles ever did apply in Ireland? Even the principle of church establishment had been abandoned in Ireland in 1869. Dicey speaks of Irish legislation as having 'generally been dictated by exceptional circumstances due to the peculiar history of Ireland.'<sup>47</sup> Gladstone's Landlord and Tenant Act of 1870, spurred on by the Fenians, began the long series of measures by which the British Parliament interfered with the 'free contract' of Irish landlord and tenant. It gave tenants the right to claim compensation for improvements made during their occupancy and for eviction for any other cause than non-payment of rent, and even in this case where rent was exorbitant. But this Act did not meet the situation. What the tenants wanted was not compensation for eviction but security against eviction, and against suddenly raised rents.<sup>48</sup>

In 1880 Gladstone, fresh from his Midlothian triumphs came into office with his mind still full of the campaign. He was intent on rescuing Europe from Disraeli; he had no thought for rescuing Ireland from her distress. 'Irish distress, Irish discontent, Irish grievances, these had become pressing

questions. Gladstone, his mind on Bulgaria, Afghanistan, the Zulus, and the Boers, gave them little of his attention,'<sup>49</sup> although the Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament promised some relief for *Irish* tenants. Gladstone thought that all that was needed was some reform of his Land Act of 1870, restoring the remedies that had been forbidden by the Lords.

In Ireland, the Government was faced 'with the most difficult of all problems, the problem of governing a society in which violence and justice were on one side, and law and power on the other.'<sup>50</sup> The rejection by the House of Lords of the Compensation for Disturbance Bills in 1880 forced the issue. 'The Government said that it was essential if they were to give Ireland peace that they should be allowed by Parliament to enforce a moratorium, to check the process of eviction until they had time to reform the law. The House of Lords refused them that power. The moratorium was in consequence enforced not by British law but by Irish violence. All the misfortunes of the following years can be attributed to this governing fact, for the Government were compelled to address themselves to two problems at once, the problem of enforcing respect for bad law, and the problem of turning bad law into good.'<sup>51</sup>

Coercion for non-payment of rent was voted in 1881 without stopping evictions, and that made impossible any conciliation with Ireland in that session of Parliament.<sup>52</sup> The policy of alternate repression and reluctant piecemeal conciliation did not suffice. Clear recognition that since everything else had been tried the only recourse left was a definite abandonment of *laissez-faire* appears in a statement by J. A. Farrer early in 1881:

The one thing in Ireland that has been least interfered with by law is freedom of contract . . . the two chief evils of Ireland, rack-renting and evictions, have survived every remedy that the law has applied . . .

It is worth . . . inquiring . . . whether this freedom of contract is not the real . . . obstacle to all progress . . . the higher we place the claims of the Irish landlords [for generosity to ten-

ants, etc.], the greater, obviously, appears the failure of the system . . .

The validity of any truth in political economy rests on the assumption that taking society as a whole, and disregarding exceptions . . . everybody . . . seeks to make the largest profit he can for himself . . . It is no reproach . . . to the land-owning class in Ireland that . . . they should . . . seek to make the most they can out of the demand of cultivators for the loan of their land . . .

. . . the course of legislation would seem clear: . . . to show the same resolution in interfering as has hitherto been shown in abstinence from interference, not only in dealings between landlord and tenant, but in those also between tenants and their labourers.<sup>53</sup>

Looking back on the Land Act of 1881 ten years later, Gladstone recognized that its passage was the result not of foresight of the Liberals but of pressure from the Irish. Aroused from his indifference to Ireland, through the pressure of events and of the Parnellites, he became converted to the principle of the 'Three F's,' Fair Rent, Fixity of Tenure, Freedom of Sale. In the House of Commons on 4 April 1882, he stated that 'There is no reason why our cheeks should grow pale, or why our hearts should sink at the idea of grappling with a political revolution . . . But a social revolution [as in Ireland] is a very different matter.'<sup>54</sup> Morley regarded the Land Act of 1881, providing Fair Rents to be settled by a Tribunal, Fixity of Tenure for all who paid their rents, and Free Sale or the right of the tenant to part with his interest, as the most deep-reaching of all Gladstone's legislative achievements.

Every current was against him. He carried his scheme against the ignorance of the country, against the prejudice of the country, and against the standing prejudices of both branches of the legislature, who were steeped from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot in the strictest doctrines of contract.<sup>55</sup>

Trail pronounced this Act

so violently hostile to every principle, equitable or economical, which had hitherto governed English legislation, that its rejection

tion on the second reading would have been thoroughly justifiable from the Conservative point of view. Lord Salisbury, however, advised the peers to accept its principle—if principle it could be called—and to be content with endeavouring to amend some of its more mischievous provisions.<sup>56</sup>

In this bill Gladstone 'was casting aside principles to which Liberals in the name of enterprise and Conservatives in the name of property, had attached a religious importance.'<sup>57</sup>

But, although the Irish land issue brought forth reiterations of the doctrine of economic liberalism in its purest form, there was no situation where twistings and modifications of orthodox economic theory to cover an acute problem demanding solution were more apparent. Even Lord Salisbury, while standing firmly on the landlord's rights, recognized that in Ireland the situation could not be dealt with on this individual basis because there 'wholesale combinations of tenants' had banded together to resist 'wholesale evictions.' Under such conditions, he says, we must look beyond the right of the individual to the rights of society. 'This land war must cease.'<sup>58</sup>

Arguments against the Three F's were usually an appeal to *principle*: 'a gross interference with the rights of the landlord'; while the arguments in favor of the Three F's appealed to *practical expediency*: 'they would . . . increase the tenant's incentive to industry and thrift'; 'the landlord would not be materially injured.'<sup>59</sup> Lord Monteagle denounced Irish land legislation as 'interference with freedom of contract,' but held that political economy operates in an actual world where there is no reason why 'the farmer alone [should] be expected to figure as the ideal "capitalist" of political economy employing all his money in remunerative investments.' 'The danger in Ireland is not a matter of political economy; it is a grave social danger.'<sup>60</sup>

*The Economist*, reluctantly conceding the necessity of the Three F's for Ireland, rose magnificently to maintain that none of these legislative changes apply to free-born Englishmen:

And however necessary may be the intervention of a Land Court for the purpose of fixing rents in Ireland, the farmers of Great Britain are quite able to make their own bargains with landlords, and stand in no need of a legal tribunal to tell them what rents they ought or ought not to pay.<sup>61</sup>

It was clearly recognized at the time just what was involved in special land legislation for Ireland. T. H. Green wrote:

That agitation [of the Irish Land League] strikes at the roots of all contract, and therefore at the very foundations of modern society; but if we would effectually withstand it, we must cease to insist on maintaining the forms of free contract where the reality is impossible.<sup>62</sup>

But once this new principle was admitted the question was inevitably asked: precisely how conditions in Ireland which permitted or necessitated the abandonment of 'economic laws' differed from conditions in England save in the acuteness with which they presented the problem.

Although Lord Salisbury in 1887 could still affirm that 'it is only in the case of the Irish tenant that anybody dreams of interfering by legislation to . . . relieve him of what he has contracted to pay' <sup>63</sup> and that 'this Bill . . . has no position in the economical system we support; it is forced upon us by a false position which we did not create,' <sup>64</sup> nevertheless he saw the implications of recognizing a new principle in Ireland. Six years earlier in speaking on the Land Act of 1881 he had said that:

It was a dangerous suggestion that there was in Ireland no freedom in contract between landlord and tenant just because demand for the soil exceeded the supply. If the principle were admitted in other cases where the same condition existed all transactions in the open market would soon disappear . . . [The] government . . . have sent Political Economics to Jupiter and Saturn and they have invented a Doctrine of Free Contract, which if it ever comes to be applied to the industries of this country will produce the utmost confusion and most bitter contention.<sup>65</sup>



In 1888 William Clarke voiced clearly the implications of land legislation beyond Ireland:

Liberals have lost the land-owning members of their party (who have become either Tory or Unionist) and they are now free to join in the Irish cry against 'Landlordism' . . .

The Conservative party . . . will resist these innovations at first, and then, after a severe struggle, will gradually yield and throw overboard its landlord Jonah (as it already has done in Ireland) to save its vessel from the threatening ocean of democracy.<sup>66</sup>

The following year the *Annual Register* noted that: 'A meeting of London tradesmen [was] held at St. James's Hall to demand fair rent, fixity of license, and compensation for improvements,'<sup>67</sup> their demands an obvious adaptation of the Three F's of the Irish Land League.

Lord Salisbury, still protesting against land legislation in debating the Tenants' Arbitration Bill in 1894, pointed out what happens when the principle of 'exceptional' is admitted:

The landlord is assuming the position of the Jew of the Middle Ages or the pariah of India. He is an outcast . . . who has no rights . . . other contracts besides those of land will be subjected to the same idea . . . the Lord Chancellor and many others take refuge behind the belief that this is only an exceptional act of legislation . . . we had the Irish Land Bill, and . . . were told that it was a thoroughly exceptional measure . . . Already that law has found its way to the crofters of Scotland, and is demanded by the farmers of Wales, while I have heard suggestions of applying it to the farmers of England . . . You cannot make exceptions . . . and say 'For the future this will not count.'<sup>68</sup>

What was actually taking place marked a third stage in the influence of Ireland on English legislation. Earlier the position had been: Whatever is good—or good enough—for England is certainly good enough for Ireland. This was succeeded by: The rules of political economy are valid, but Ireland is an exception to all rules. The third stage was: If Ireland is privileged to benefit from these deviations from

political economy, why can't Englishmen also enjoy them? What special conditions make them undesirable for England?

But it was not only as a peripheral region for developing alternate procedures that Ireland shaped events in England. A second influence of Ireland was the diversion of attention from social problems in England through concentration on Ireland. In some cases evils could come to a head in England while the attention of the legislature was focused on Ireland; in others solutions could be matured obscurely without being in the public eye. The definite policy of filibustering by Parnell and his party,\* paralyzing session after session of Parliament, intensified public indignation over neglect of English for Irish affairs.

Garvin deplored the fact that, despite the color and personal drama and great possibilities of the House of Commons assembled in 1880, Ireland from the first session blocked consideration of domestic issues in England.† Morley wrote in the *Fortnightly* in March 1880:

So far as the subject of domestic policy is concerned, the present session may be said to have begun at the point at which the last session ended, and Ireland continues to enjoy a practical monopoly of the attention of the House of Commons.<sup>69</sup>

And again in January 1882: 'At the close of the year, as at its beginning, the constant topic of the politician is still Ireland.'<sup>70</sup>

*The Economist* was vehement in its protest against the extent to which matters of urgent importance were side-tracked.

It is impossible while this strange struggle between Ireland and Great Britain lasts for Parliament to devote time to any other business . . .<sup>71</sup>

\* See Ch vi, pp. 232-4.

† J. L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, London, Macmillan, 1932, Vol. I, pp. 316-17. *Reynolds' Newspaper* throughout 1880 and 1881 was continuously urging justice to Ireland to make possible concern with domestic problems in England, both in preference to involvement with affairs on the continent.

Above all, it was found impossible to bring forward the great economic question of the day, the agricultural distress . . . Everything was sacrificed to Ireland except party acrimony . . .<sup>72</sup>

In still a third way Ireland figured as an incitement to change in English opinion: in the indignation aroused by Gladstone's repressive policy in Ireland. The Midlothian campaign attested not only the vigor of the Grand Old Man but the eager response of liberals antagonized by Disraeli's policy toward small nations in Europe. Then the party, elected to restore magnanimity and good will, adopted a policy toward Ireland which alienated those hovering on the edge of radicalism, and quickly consolidated them into the ranks of those who hoped nothing from the liberals and demanded drastic change.

Justin McCarthy, despite his liberal sympathies, says roundly:

It would have been better for Ireland, and for England also, if at the time the Tory Government had been in office, although the Tory Government had done everything that the Liberal Government was doing. Irishmen would have suffered and groaned, indeed, but they would have said to themselves that there was nothing else to be expected from the Tories.<sup>73</sup>

But it was a shock of disappointment that the Liberal Government itself proved an enemy. Forster 'was cramming Irish prisons with men whose only offence was that they were pressing too passionately for land reform which Mr. Forster's own Government acknowledged to be needed.'<sup>74</sup>

The peculiar position of Ireland in relation to England, and the urgency of the Irish land crisis, served to force English attention to the land problem as an index to other social issues. The publication of a single book served the same end.

Every contemporary commentator speaks of the publication of *Progress and Poverty*, in America in 1880, in England in 1881, as one of the most spectacular of the igniting sparks which gave quick vigor to emerging changes in

thought. George's theory of a single tax on land was seized upon as a solution of all social ills.

It is not surprising to find Hyndman, in reviewing 'these adventurous years,' referring to *Progress and Poverty* as having had 'a great effect upon the public mind' and 'facilitating the promulgation of Marx's own theories in Great Britain';<sup>75</sup> or to see the Christian Fabian, Stewart Headlam, hail 'a man sent from God whose name was Henry George,'<sup>76</sup> or to find Tom Mann writing of *Progress and Poverty* in 1881, 'it impressed me as by far the most valuable book I had so far read';<sup>77</sup> and one would expect Alfred Russel Wallace to welcome George enthusiastically as an ally. But to find Spencer writing to Wallace in July 1881 that he already had *Progress and Poverty*,<sup>78</sup> Darwin ordering it the same month,<sup>79</sup> Jevons reading it in November 1881,<sup>80</sup> Morley reading it 'electrified,'<sup>81</sup> Arnold Toynbee lecturing on it in his last public appearance before his death,<sup>82</sup> Chamberlain recommending it to Lady Dorothy Nevill, saying that it was being 'eagerly read by the working classes'<sup>83</sup>—suggests the range of impact of this single book.

When the 6d. English edition appeared in 1882, *The Times* printed a friendly review five columns long. An extended review by Emile de Laveleye appeared in the *Contemporary Review*, criticizing the single tax as doctrinaire but agreeing 'that present misery is not due to the niggardliness of Nature and to certain inevitable laws, but to the imperfections of our institutions.'<sup>84</sup> And *The Economist* regarded the book as of sufficient importance to review separately both the American and English editions, disagreeing with Mr. George's conclusions but saying that on the critical side the book is 'powerful, graphic, and instructive.'<sup>85</sup>

Frederic Harrison and John Bright and the Tory and Liberal parties thought it of enough importance to oppose officially George's views. Lord Salisbury, speaking in Dorchester in 1884, warned his listeners that 'We are on an inclined plane leading from the position of Lord Hartington to that of Mr. Chamberlain and so on to the depths over which Mr. Henry George rules supreme.'<sup>86</sup>

W. H. Mallock believed that *Progress and Poverty* epitomized the anti-individualist point of view he was attempting to combat, and in 1884 he published *Property and Progress* as an answer to Henry George. No admirer of George was stronger in admitting his influence:

One of the chiefs of the Irish Land League has become his enthusiastic disciple; and what was yesterday the mere aspiration of the thinker, will probably tomorrow be the actual demand of the agitator . . . Mr. George's . . . book . . . is at this moment selling by thousands in the alleys and back-streets of England . . . it is fast forming a new public opinion . . .

It is not the poor, it is not the seditious only, who have been thus affected by Mr. George's doctrines. They have received a welcome, which is even more singular amongst certain sections of the really instructed classes . . . Finally, certain trained economic thinkers . . . are reported to have said that they see no means of reluting them, and that they probably mark the beginning of a new political epoch.<sup>87</sup>

*Progress and Poverty* had sold more than 60,000 copies in England by 1885, and George was hailed as 'a new and better Adam Smith.' John Rae, discussing contemporary socialism, stated that Henry George, although not a socialist, had done more 'than any other single person to stir and deepen in this country an agitation which, if not socialistic, at least promises to be the mother of socialism.' The successive votes of the Trade Union Congress on land nationalization, which found a mover but no seconder in 1879 and seventy-one votes in 1882, show graphically the extent to which George's ideas were permeating popular thought.<sup>88</sup>

Henry George presented in simple concrete language an analysis of human suffering and a graphic proposal for its remedy that people could understand. In the 'eighties he furnished an intellectual bridge over which many people passed from individualism to socialism. By the time George made his third tour to England in 1889, the idea of single tax had become a commonplace and J. E. Tymes had written an economic textbook from the single-tax point of view.

Another social phenomenon which thrust itself upon public attention was the joint problem of Health and Housing. The laws of economic liberalism should operate; grown men should make their own bargains; the State should refrain from grandmotherly legislation—but *people should not live like that*.

British industrial towns had mushroomed up around factories with little regard for either beauty or sanitation. 'Slums' had become a characteristic feature of nineteenth-century industrial life. Houses were thrown up haphazard as near the factory as possible and, as more and more people crowded in, cellars were used as dwellings, courtyards were enclosed for habitation, and sun and air were crowded out. Crowding and unsanitary dwellings prevailed. Alfred Marshall characterized as one of the nineteenth-century 'industrial specialties' of large cities the 'weakness of body, mind, and character' in workers who for several generations had lived unwholesome lives in unwholesome dwellings.<sup>80</sup>

As early as the 'thirties both the toll of life taken by urban living and the correlation between health and occupation began to appear:

#### EXPECTATION OF LIFE AT BIRTH

	<i>Bath</i>	<i>Rutland</i>	<i>Wilts</i>	<i>Derby</i>	<i>Truro</i>	<i>Leeds</i>	<i>Man- chester</i>	<i>Liver- pool</i>
Gentlefolk	55	52	50	49	40	45	38	35
Traders and								
Farmers	37	41	48	38	33	27	20	22
Labourers	25	38	33	21	28	19	17	15

In London the mortality was twice as great in the East End as in the West.<sup>80</sup>

Thirty years later, in 1864, in sixty-three 'healthy' districts of England and Wales, 4 per cent of the children under five died annually; in 151 other districts the average annual death rate of children under five was 8 per cent. In Sheffield, East London, Nottingham, and Leeds it was over 10 per cent; in Manchester 12 per cent, in Liverpool 13 per cent.<sup>81</sup>

In 1891 a comparison of the death rates between three

agricultural counties and seven factory towns shows the results of urban work and urban living:

RECORDED DEATH-RATES, 1891, PER 10,000 LIVING <sup>92</sup>

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Diseases of Respiratory System</i>	<i>Diseases of Nervous System</i>
Three Agricultural Counties..	164	42.4	23.4
Seven Factory Towns.....	244	82.6	31.4

These figures as related to housing are more significant in view of the fact that it was not until 1891 that there was the first legislative restriction upon the use of slum houses as places of work—the first restriction upon the ‘sweater’s den.’

Edwin Chadwick, as Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, labored to secure better health and better housing through legislation. But the Board of Health, established in 1848 as a result of the cholera epidemic as much as of Chadwick’s efforts, had only optional powers and small funds; and it was abolished in 1854 with the applause of *The Times*. The Benthamite insistence on centralized authority to provide the conditions for decent living had been submerged by the insistence on economic freedom. But the former was not altogether lost. The year after the Board of Health was abolished there was set up the Metropolitan Board of Works, the first authorized central body which could attack the problem of housing. The Nuisances Removal Act in the same year made possible the closing of houses injurious to health, but since it had no mandatory clause, it had little effect. Even the largest municipalities were slow in carrying out the sanitary reforms made possible under the Act. Except for a few very large towns, medical health officers were unknown. As late as the middle of the century Birmingham, which had doubled its population in three decades and had turned from one of the healthiest into one of the sickliest towns in England, had sought to look after the physical welfare of nearly a quarter of a million people with one inspec-

tor of nuisances and a doctor. And the doctor's office was allowed to lapse for reasons of economy. Manchester did not appoint a medical officer until 1868. In that year the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act, known as the Torrens Act, enabled local authorities to improve or tear down existing individual dwellings pronounced uninhabitable, but this act apparently affected only about two thousand houses in five cities.<sup>93</sup> In 1885 under the Cross Act, similar provision was made for larger areas of slum clearance. The actual operation of these acts depended upon the initiative and activity of disparate local authorities, and even when supplemented by the Public Health Acts of 1875 and 1891 effected relatively little change. It was not until the Local Government Act setting up County Councils was passed in 1888 that there was any body in existence which had authority to deal in any effective way with problems of health and sanitation.\*

In the early 'eighties approximately one-fifth of the people of London lived more than two to a room.<sup>94</sup> Although in certain districts of London and in the majority of outlying towns four-room cottages for one family or six-room cottages for two families were the rule, in large areas of London the only housing for the people consisted of blocks of tenement houses with no restriction on overcrowding and no enforced provisions for sanitation or health.

Lord Shaftesbury testifying before the Royal Commission on Housing in 1884 said, describing a district in the Bermondsey region of London:

It was a large swamp where a number of people lived, as they do in Holland, in houses built upon piles . . . So bad was the supply of water there that I have positively seen the women drop their buckets into the water over which they were living, and in which was deposited all the filth of the place, that being the only water they had for every purpose of washing and drinking.<sup>95</sup>

The *Fortnightly Review* in 1883 referred editorially to a statement by John Bright that 'more than 30 per cent of all the inhabitants of Glasgow had but one room in which to

\* See Ch. v, pp. 169-74.



live, eat and sleep,' saying that 'the truth of this statement cannot be questioned' and that the material progress of London 'forces the workman and his family to live under conditions more and more injurious to health and morals.' <sup>96</sup>

Meantime public protest mounted. It is possible to overlook occasional miserable sickly families; but it is not so easy to overlook square miles of them—especially when discoveries of the bacteriological basis of disease had begun to make people aware that, whatever the theory of individualism, health was not an individual matter. The *Charity Organisation Society Review* stated roundly: 'An Englishman's house is his castle, of course; but no one has a right to turn his castle into a Black Hole of Calcutta.' <sup>97</sup>

In 1879 Canon Barnett, Vicar of St. Jude's in Whitechapel, described houses, 'ruinous and insanitary,' renting for nine shillings a week. Two years later he wrote:

It is hard to write without passion, when one reflects on the deaths and the suffering, on the sin and shame which have been added to the sum of London's misery during the six years in which houses condemned as unfit for habitation have been allowed to stand. If it is said that the cost of greater speed would have been too great, it might well be asked what other objects has the State in view which makes it too great an expense to preserve and protect its people? . . . My hope of one day having a parish with houses fit for decent people has grown very faint.\*

Octavia Hill and other rent collectors of the Charity Organisation Society joined in continuous efforts to secure prompt action on the part of the scattered and inept municipal authorities.

But late in 1883 there appeared a small pamphlet which brought these protests to a head and won instant attention. This was *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, by Andrew Mearns, a Congregational clergyman in East London. Like *Progress and Poverty*, this became a statement which could not be stepped around or ignored. W. T. Stead in the *Pall*

\* Henrietta O. Barnett, *Canon Barnett*, New York, Putnam, 1921, pp. 130, 134. For an account of Canon Barnett's work, see Ch. VIII, pp. 321-3

*Mall Gazette* 'called the attention of the world' to Mearns's penny pamphlet, and afterwards referred to the immediate response his editorials aroused as 'the first great coup' of the *Pall Mall* under his editorship.\* The demand for reform resulting from Mearns's pamphlet, with Stead's publicizing of it, was one of the important factors leading to the appointment of the Royal Commission on Housing in 1884 and to the Housing Act of 1890.

Shortly afterward Mearns continued the discussion in the *Contemporary Review*:

No one dreams of disputing the fact that in most quarters of the metropolis—not in the east end only—there are districts in which are to be found houses that are utterly unfit for human beings to occupy . . . the vast majority of suburban London houses are constructed so as to last no longer than the duration of the lease, with inevitable discomfort to the inhabitants throughout the period . . .

It has . . . been . . . 'the steady, settled policy of the City Corporation for many years to drive out the poor from within their borders.' How is it that spaces are cleared for new buildings, and yet left for years, before a single brick is laid? <sup>98</sup>

Mearns's final recommendations included purchase of freehold land, the formation of dwellings companies, the appointment of state officers of health, and 'State interference, as well as Christian and philanthropic effort, on behalf of the young.'

At the same time Chamberlain wrote: 'The fact is that all parties are now at one as to the existence and serious nature of the disease,' and went on to point out that the whole question is whether Parliament is ready to recognize the obligations as well as the privileges of ownership.<sup>99</sup> The result of this aroused public opinion was the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, whose sponsorship was later claimed by persons ranging from Queen Victoria to the Charity Organisation Society, and

\* Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1925, Vol. I, p. 105. Cf. Ch IX, pp. 366-70, on the combined educational effect of greater literacy and cheaper newspapers.

among whose members were Sir Charles Dilke, the Prince of Wales, Cardinal Manning, and Lord Salisbury.

The question of health and housing, like the depression and the land issue, served as a focal point around which the doctrines of political economy could be seen in all stages of modification. The housing question furnished Herbert Spencer with some of his best ammunition.

In the case . . . of the supply of houses for the poor . . . the terrible evils complained of are mostly law-made . . . The Artisans' Dwellings Act gave . . . to local authorities powers to pull down bad houses and provide for the building of good ones. What have been the results? A summary of the operations of the Metropolitan Board of Works, dated December 21, 1883, shows that up to last September it had, at a cost of a million and a quarter to rate-payers, unhoused 21,000 persons and provided homes for 12,000—the remaining 9,000 . . . being meanwhile left homeless . . .

See then what legislation has done. By ill-imposed taxes raising the prices of bricks and timber, it added to the cost of houses; and prompted for economy's sake, the use of bad materials in scanty quantities. To check the consequent production of wretched dwellings, it established regulations which, in mediæval fashion dictated the quality of the commodity produced; there being no perception that by insisting on a higher quality and therefore higher price, it would limit the demand and eventually diminish the supply . . . Finally, having by successive measures, produced first bad houses, and then a deficiency of better ones, it has at length provided for the artificially increased overflow of poor people by diminishing the house-capacity which already could not contain them!

Where then lies the blame for the miseries of the East-end? Against whom would be raised 'the bitter cry of outcast London'? <sup>100</sup>

Commenting on Lord Salisbury's Housing of the Working Classes Bill in 1885, *The Economist* said:

. . . the Bill is intended to provide a remedy for overcrowding, by . . . offering temptations, to the erection of artisans' dwellings, and the letting of them at less than market rents . . . There is no possibility of mistaking the meaning of this singular

provision, and it is difficult to see how those who have made themselves responsible for it can logically object on principle to any application of the new doctrines of State Socialism . . . In other words, the tax-payers are to make a subvention towards the better housing of the London poor . . .<sup>101</sup>

Five years later, however, in discussing the Housing Act of 1890, *The Economist* recognized that 'there are cases in which municipal enterprise is of great value,' while adding that 'it is very desirable not to create the idea that we must in the future invoke the action of public authorities for the supply of dwellings for the working classes rather than rely upon private enterprise.'<sup>102</sup>

The Royal Commission on Housing in 1884-5 was a 'continuous tug of war between laissez-faire theories in support of private enterprise and various proposals for municipal housing and government purchase, with all manner of modifications of theories to meet specific emergencies on the side lines.

A Memorandum signed by Goschen, Stanley, and Samuel Morley re-affirmed economic liberalism:

If, as we believe the truth to be, it is in the main on private enterprise . . . that the public must rely for the supply of houses . . . then . . . it is impossible to turn at the same time to the local authorities for the provision of the same article . . . How can it be expected that capital will flow into the building trade if the builders know that they may expect at any moment to be exposed to the competition of municipal building on a large scale? . . .

. . . We are reluctant to create an expectation, either of State subsidies, or of the building of working-class dwellings at the public expense . . . we are opposed to measures which . . . are calculated to weaken the motives which prompt the steady development of private enterprise.<sup>103</sup>

In the same vein, a Memorandum signed by Lord Salisbury and William Bedford stated that:

Sanitary mischief arising from structural defects is in the first instance the affair of the owner. What is wanted of the law is

that it should enforce the duties of the owner, and if need be, give him the power required for performing them . . .

Again, the overcrowding, so far as it exists, in provincial towns, or in the suburban parts of London, may probably be cured by the ordinary sequence of supply upon demand . . . [although] in the more central parts of London the problem will not solve itself in this manner . . .<sup>104</sup>

A Memorandum by Jesse Collings, on the other hand, extended the exception:

The rent of dwellings in the metropolis and in large towns is not governed by the principle of 'supply and demand' as the term 'supply and demand' is usually understood. The evidence is conclusive in showing that the labouring classes are compelled to live in certain areas of the metropolis in order to gain their living . . .<sup>105</sup>

Your Majesty's Commissioners therefore recommend that compulsory powers to purchase land under the Act should be given to the local authority by provisional order.<sup>106</sup>

It was such mutually neutralizing statements of policy and counter-policy and refusal to face the issue primarily in terms of providing better houses rather than of manipulating taxes and other institutional devices that led *Reynolds' Newspaper* to summarize the work of the Commission scornfully:

The first report of the Royal Commission on Housing of the poor is as disappointing an official deliverance as we ever remember to have read. A prince, a cardinal [and fifteen others] have collected just as much information as has been known to any newspaper reader with a good memory for seventeen years . . . The Commissioners . . . fear to make a drastic recommendation which would shock landlordism to the center. What we want is that the municipality . . . shall have power to buy land, and to build and to let out the houses so built at cost price to the poor . . . As it is, the report carries us no further than we were at New Year's Day, 1884. If we needed the lesson, the report tells us not to put our faith in Royal Commissions . . . [with] all the conventional nonsense which is usually talked and written about supply and demand and politico-economic laws . . .<sup>107</sup>

In the same mood Chamberlain had written less than two years earlier in the *Fortnightly Review*: '. . . these [Torrens and Cross Housing] . . . Acts are tainted and paralysed by the incurable timidity with which Parliament . . . is accustomed to deal with the sacred rights of property . . .' <sup>108</sup>

The publication of the Report of the Royal Commission was an incident in the agitation for housing reform rather than a resolution of the issues involved. Despite the skepticism of *Reynolds' Newspaper* it not only included in its recommendations extension and implementing of the powers of local authorities and of the requirements of existing Health and Housing Acts, but also recommended certain definite innovations. These were: compulsory purchase of land by local authorities; reduction of compensation for land acquired under the Housing Acts to market value; government loans for municipal housing schemes and to workers for home ownership; cheaper transit to outlying districts and immediate compensation by railroads for the taking-over of homes.<sup>109</sup> The Local Government Act of 1888 would have made it possible for particularly active County Councils, such as that of London, to put some of these recommendations into effect.

But different groups continued to see problems of health and housing in terms of their own special version of what was important in the world scene. Insistence on the basic importance of property rights prevailed over recognition of the importance of decent homes for the people. Only a few of the recommendations of the Royal Commission were embodied in the Housing Act of 1890. This law re-enacted and consolidated the earlier Acts and at the same time created new powers of buying up insanitary areas, demolishing unfit dwellings, and of erecting new houses. Such reforms as were made benefited artisans earning twenty-five to thirty shillings a week rather than the very poor. Successful attempts at bettering conditions were still largely the work of isolated individuals rather than of local authorities.

These various moves, halting as they were, once again called attention to the fact that a major social problem, now

generally recognized, could not be dealt with on the basis of economic liberalism. Other solutions would have to be found.

None of the social situations discussed here was wholly new either as material fact or as perception of a problem. There had been other acute breaks in prosperity; there had been land hunger and deprivation of farmers; there had been misery resulting from bad housing and bad health; certainly there had been Ireland. And from Chadwick to Dickens and Joseph Arch there had been attempts to make people sensitive to these conditions. But while optimistic individualism prevailed, the tendency was to trust these things to right themselves automatically and to keep awareness of them at the edge of consciousness.\*

Now at the same time that the doctrine of complacent individualism was wearing thin, and that Bismarck's legislation was showing new ways of dealing with social maladjustments, many of these problems became suddenly more urgent. General consciousness of certain situations *as problems* was quickened by the background of hope and expectation against which social ills appeared. But frustration and insecurity alone do not enable people to lay hold of new ideas. Increased communication, education, the vote gave the masses of the people more security in pressing their demands at the same time that greater strains were cracking the optimism of the dominant groups.

Furthermore, although they pressed specific demands, the increasingly articulate people were becoming less inclined to be satisfied with piecemeal solutions or explanations. Some of the soothing optimistic pronouncements at the Industrial Remuneration Conference brought forth sharp response. Mr. Lloyd Jones in reply to Alfred Marshall said:

\* Cf. Briefs, op. cit. pp. 55 ff. for discussion of the fact that the concept of the 'proletariat' as a class set over against 'capitalists' as a class does not occur while an optimistic individualism prevails.

The question [is] . . . not whether the worker . . . [is] better off than his grandfather in a number of things, but whether he . . . [is] as well off as the resources of the country entitle him to be. We . . . [can] not reform the past, but we . . . [could] reform the use we . . . [make] of that which . . . [is] in our hands at present.<sup>110</sup>

At the end of the decade Tom Mann was declaring that the sops to social reform then being grudgingly thrown to the workers were not enough:

We believe that to hold out as baits hopes of amelioration of the condition of the workers, to be wrung out of the necessities of the rival factions of our privileged rulers, is delusive and mischievous.<sup>111</sup>

I declared no less emphatically that shorter hours would not cure unemployment, and that no restriction of the working day, however rigid, would meet the case. It was to be looked upon merely as a palliative, pending the realization of Socialism.<sup>112</sup>



## V. *Signs of Change*

LOOKING back upon the 'eighties Winston Churchill wrote, 'It was the end of an epoch.' Fifty years' perspective led Beatrice Webb to view the Gladstone Parliament of 1880-85 as 'the "no man's land" between the old Radicalism and the New Socialism.'<sup>1</sup>

An American observer wrote at the end of the 'eighties:

A few relics of the period now past remain:—the old Whigs, who have seen little need of change since their freedom was gained in 1832; and the adherents of the Liberty and Property Defense League, an extreme laissez-faire organization composed of land-owners and capitalists, who would restrict the state absolutely to the defense of country, person, and property.<sup>2</sup>

In the exceptions and alternatives to economic individualism in practice and in new statements of philosophy a two-fold idea was gaining wide support: In modern industrial society individuals in isolation, unsupported by the social structure, can achieve neither material welfare nor positive freedom; and it is the function of the State actively to promote a social basis for welfare and freedom.

There is no easy way to measure such shifts in social philosophy. A specific legislative act may be a final precipitation of opinion which has long been in the making or a sudden emergency measure to meet a particular situation, which anticipates clear awareness of the underlying problem. In informal discussions of small insurgent groups we may glimpse the earlier stages of some of the ideas which lie back of a new legislative policy or a sudden spurt of action. The

decade of the 'eighties produced many such groups,\* acting as yeast, fomenting new forms of thought.

Legislative acts embodying some conception of the 'welfare State' multiplied rapidly toward the end of the century.† Ever since Sir Robert Peel's 'Health and Morals of Apprentices Act' in 1802 had recognized that individual children under the conditions then prevailing in the cotton mills could not depend wholly on rational self-direction for securing their welfare, and had provided that they should not work more than twelve hours a day and that not more than two should share a bed, the State had at intervals interfered with 'economic laws' for the welfare of the people. The first act with power to enforce sanitary regulations in factories was passed in 1837.

Gladstone's Act of 1845 giving the Board of Trade some control over railroads; the Ten Hour Factory Act of 1850; the Health Act of 1858; the Joint Stock Companies Act of 1862; the Bankruptcy Act of 1869; the Civil Service and Elementary Education Acts of 1870; the Mines Regulation Act of 1872; the Public Health Act, the Cross Housing Act, the Factory Act forbidding employment of children under ten in textile factories, the Act freeing trade unions from indictment for conspiracy, all in 1875; the Plimsoll Act protecting seamen—all pointed toward a view of the State not as passive policeman but as active promoter of the welfare of its citizens. But it is only in the late 'seventies and 'eighties that the new policy began to be regarded as normal procedure.

The Factory and Workshop Act of 1878 consolidated earlier acts giving some measure of protection to women and children in certain carefully restricted industries and making

\* Cf. Ch. x.

† Measured by sheer number of laws passed, the activity of the government grew enormously during the last decades of the century, registering state responsibility for welfare. Taking only the laws advocated by the Trade Union Congress, we find twenty-three in the decade of the 'seventies, forty-five, nearly twice as many, in the 'eighties, and the same number in the 'nineties. (Howell, *op cit.* pp 468-72. Cf. A. V. Dicey, *Lectures on Law and Public Opinion in England*, London, Macmillan, 2nd ed., 1914, p. xxxi.)

enforcement of this protection more effective by organization of a hierarchy of inspectors under a chief inspector at the Home Office. In the same year the employment of children and young persons was prohibited in certain branches of the white-lead industry. This was a clear-cut case of legislation dealing with the section of the population least able to provide for itself, protecting them in regard to maintenance of life and health, the most commonly accepted human good, in an industry most indisputably recognized as highly injurious. In 1883 this protection was extended by the passage of an Act requiring the occupier of every white-lead factory to draw up special rules for conditions of employment to be approved by a Secretary of State, who should be empowered to alter them as he thought fit. In 1889 similar protection was provided for employees in cotton-cloth factories, and by 1896 the principle had been so far accepted that a Departmental Committee was appointed to consider the 'conditions of work as they affect the health of the operatives' in a long list of industries and processes.<sup>3</sup> By the Factory Act of 1891, furthermore, sanitary regulations were extended to workshops in which only adult men were employed; 'outworkers' were listed as a possible prelude to supervision of home work; <sup>4</sup> the age of employment of children was raised to eleven years; <sup>5</sup> and the time after which women might return to work after childbirth was extended to four weeks.\*

In 1880, however, there was passed an Act, not for a special group of the population in particular needs of assistance, or for workers in particularly hazardous industries, but for the great body of workers. This was the Employers' Lia-

\* 'This clause . . . was strongly opposed in the Lords by Lord Wemyss. He . . . produced evidence intended to prove that the clause was unnecessary, as many women were capable of returning to work in a period less than the four weeks prescribed . . . Lord Wemyss . . . suggested that the clause would take away "literally one-twelfth of a woman's earnings in the year." Lord Salisbury pointed out that none of these arguments were germane to the real issue involved, which was the interest of the child. The clause became law, but there can be little doubt that it is practically inoperative' (B. L. Hutchins and A. Harrison, *A History of Factory Legislation*, London, King, 1911, pp. 210-11.)

bility Act, first introduced in 1879, and the subject of heated opposition on the ground that it interfered with freedom of contract and the rights of property and would discourage investment of capital in industry.<sup>6</sup> It received the Royal Assent in 1880 and came into operation on 1 January 1881. This Act challenged the principle in operation since 1837 that no workman should receive any compensation for injuries inflicted by a fellow employee, although it was not until 1894 that the doctrine of 'common employment' was completely abolished legally. The Act of 1880 was a milestone in legislation, not only because it established the precedent of legislation for the benefit of the mass of the working population, but also because after its enactment it became a new center of struggle over property versus welfare.

The immediate response to this Act, a response which continued throughout the decade, was for employers to 'contract out of' it and to persuade their men to do the same. The *Annual Register* noted:

Jan. 1. The Employers' Liability Act came into operation. In many cases of railroads . . . and large employers of labour in the manufacturing districts, the masters and men by mutual consent contracted themselves out of the Act, and continued their former relations.<sup>7</sup>

*The Economist* was emphatic in condemning this practice:

In attempting to coerce their workmen into contracting themselves out of the Employers' Liability Act, the Lancashire mine-owners are acting in a high-handed fashion which is certain to defeat its own object . . . They are . . . stirring up an agitation which may compel further legislative interference on behalf of the men.<sup>8</sup>

This practice of by-passing the Act was still the occasion of vigorous protests at the time of the Labour Commission of the 'nineties. Sixty thousand miners were reported to have been forced to contract out of the Act in Lancashire alone,\*

\* Testimony of Mr. Joseph Toyn before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 9 July 1891, *Minutes of Evidence, First Report*, Vol. xxxiv, 1892, pp. 50-51.

and a colliery owner in North Lancashire said that he had never heard of a case of a coal-owner's making any payment under the Liability Act.\* Reports of the Commission contain frequent references to 'smart money' paid by the owners to the workers to prevent their taking advantage of legal liability insurance. The employers 'explained that their motive in incurring the apparently gratuitous expense connected with the funds was "to acquire security for the continuance of amicable relations between themselves and their workmen."' '9 In other words, the funds paid to workmen in lieu of insurance against accidents served to insure employers against strikes.

Throughout this period workers constantly urged the abolition of contracting out of the Act. They stated repeatedly:

. . . Our agitation for the Employers' Liability Bill was never conducted with a view to receiving money. It was conducted with a desire to have all the safety that we could for our occupation. . . .†

Despite the violations, however, the Act established a precedent of interference with private property for public good which it was thereafter hard to ignore. The following year saw this principle further established by the passing of the Ground Game Act. This Act permitted tenant farmers to shoot hares and rabbits on land which they occupied in contrast to the earlier Game Laws, which condemned a poacher to seven years' deportation. It was openly recognized at the time that this, as well as the Employers' Liability Act, were clear cases of interference with individual liberty as conceived by *laissez-faire*. T. H. Green wrote:

At least two liberal measures of the last session, summer of 1880, were opposed in the name of freedom. To the Ground Game Act it was objected that it interfered with freedom of contract

\* Testimony of George Watson Macalpine before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 19 November 1891, *ibid.* p. 341.

† John Wilson, M.P., financial secretary of the Durham Miners' Association, testimony before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 8 July 1891, *ibid.* p. 25.

between landlord and tenant . . . The Employers' Liability Act was objected to on similar grounds . . .

The same line of objection is equally applicable . . . to our factory acts, education acts, and laws relating to public health. They all . . . limit a man's power of doing what he will with what he considers his own. They all involve the legal prohibition of certain agreements between man and man.<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Knowles (Conservative) said of the Employers' Liability Act in the House of Commons:

I contend that if the House passes this Bill, they must include something in it that would give mineowners power to relinquish their leases, or it will confiscate their property. I would take half the value of my property now that I would have taken a week ago, in consequence of what has fallen from the Prime Minister . . . I believe this is the most revolutionary measure ever brought into this House against the trading community of the country.<sup>11</sup>

Legislation on health and sanitation resulted less from concern for the welfare of the poor than from the growing realization that—whatever the theory of individualism—epidemics occasioned by bad sewage and bad housing and by food and clothing produced under unsanitary conditions affected all of society. Typhus and cholera epidemics in the 'thirties had, under Chadwick's urging, brought in the short-lived Board of Health. Even after the disappearance of this central organization, municipalities acting under the Health Act of 1858 sporadically carried on the campaign for pure-water supply and sewage disposal. Awareness of bad sanitation and ill health as a national problem was stamped in by recurrent epidemics,\* Pasteur's development of the bacteria theory, and the manifest inability of a physically unfit nation to compete economically with a physically fit nation such as

\* Cf. Ch. IV, pp. 144-52, on growing awareness of problems of health and housing. During the 'sixties and 'seventies people expected to die of consumption and diphtheria, and childbirths were frequently fatal. Bertrand Russell's mother, one of the wealthiest women in England, lost a child through breech delivery and she herself at the age of thirty-one, with her daughter, died of diphtheria.

Germany. A Royal Commission in 1869 emphasized again the need for a strong central authority to deal with public health. But central authority was distrusted and local authority was chaotic. The Public Health Act of 1875 provided for administration of health only under the local Poor Law Board, which merely changed its name to the Local Government Board. In 1883 the Diseases Prevention Act established the principle that the time-honored distinction between pauper and non-pauper must be abolished when it interfered with the health of the community. It provided that 'The admission of any person suffering from infectious disease into any hospital provided by the Metropolitan Asylums Board, or the maintenance of any person therein, should not be considered parochial relief.'<sup>12</sup> In 1888 the Local Government Act introduced some measure of order into local administration and made possible more forthright and co-ordinated action by local communities on health problems. There followed in 1889 and 1890 Health Acts dealing with notification of infectious diseases and prohibiting the sale of milk from infected dairies.\*

In other areas, as well, every session of Parliament saw legislation embodying state protection or provision for welfare in the case of special groups, special needs, or special situations.

In 1861 Gladstone had established the Post Office Savings Bank and inaugurated, without being aware of it, the policy of the government's embarking upon the savings-bank business. In 1880 the sale of annuities through the post office was begun and the State entered the insurance business. In 1883

\* Awareness of danger from infected food was extended during this period. 'On November 27, 1878, an article in the *N. Y. Weekly Tribune* stressed the importance of concerted action for control and elimination of . . . [pleuropneumonia in cattle]. English newspapers quoted this article with a demand for an embargo on American cattle. In January 1879, a cargo of American beef was condemned on its arrival at Liverpool. An inquiry was started by the English government, and on 8 February 1879, the Privy Council issued an order compelling the slaughter of all American cattle on the docks of the English ports at which they were landed.' (John M. Gaus and Leon O. Wolcott, *Public Administration and the U. S. Department of Agriculture*, Chicago, Public Administration Service, 1940, p. 166.)

the Parcel Post started the government on a monopoly of the express business. In 1890, with the Housing Act, it entered the field of real-estate development.

The laws regulating Alkali Works and Mines in 1881 and 1882, legislation on electric lighting, the Reform and Redistribution Acts extending suffrage to rural workers, of 1884 and 1885, the bankruptcy Acts of 1881 and 1883 (giving the Board of Trade jurisdiction over bankruptcy 'in the public interest'), the Truck Act of 1886 (extending prohibition on payment of workers in kind), the Merchandise Marts Act, the Allotment Act of 1887 (authorizing rural authorities to acquire land for benefit of tenants), the Local Government Act of 1888, the Act of 1889 protecting children from ill-treatment—all mark extension of the conception of human welfare, on the one hand, and of state responsibility for it, on the other. By the end of the 'eighties Great Britain had 150,000 persons in purely civil employment.<sup>18</sup>

It must not be assumed that all of these measures were passed with as clear recognition that old principles were being thrust aside and new ones coming into active use as was true in the case of the Employers' Liability Act. England was inching along into change without paying much heed to the direction or rate of change. Legislation was grudging and halting. Not the least significant indication of the tentative character of the new principles was the confessedly temporary nature of Parliamentary action. Gladstone's Midlothian campaign of 1880 was negative in tone,\* and the same hesitant attitude was carried over into his whole term of office. There seemed to be a general sense of proceeding in gingerly fashion in stepping onto unfamiliar ground. A characteristic of Parliament's work during this five years of Liberal government was the number of temporary measures of legislation. The Employers' Liability Act of 1880 was to terminate in 1887; the Corrupt Practices Acts were all limited in duration; the powers of the Railroad Commissioners were for a brief period; a measure to remove restrictions on the nego-

\* Cf. Ch. VI, pp. 217-18; 225-6.



tiation of promissory notes was valid for only three years. Parliament seemed uncertain of its own actions. Much of the legislation had something of the emergency character of the legislation of the New Deal. But these measures enacted to deal with particular situations were not forgotten; they embodied principles which could be appealed to again; they became bench marks of change.

Extension of public responsibility during these years was marked not only by specific laws but by other official and semi-official expressions of concern for welfare. In April 1883, under pressure of the serious outbreaks of cattle disease, the Prime Minister appointed a Committee of Council for the consideration of all matters relating to agriculture, a characteristic temporizing device when the government was hesitant to take more definite action. This Committee of Council paved the way for a Department of Agriculture.

The 'eighties was a decade of Royal Commissions. It was the Royal Commission on Fever and Smallpox Hospitals which led to the Diseases Prevention Act admitting the poor with infectious diseases to hospital care. A Royal Commission on Agriculture, dealing with agricultural depression, reported in 1882. In the early 'eighties the problem of the unemployed had no official existence. In 1885 the Industrial Remuneration Conference, made possible by an anonymous gift and sponsored, among others, by Sir Thomas Brassey, the Earl of Dalhousie, Professor Foxwell, Robert Giffen, and Frederic Harrison <sup>14</sup> met to inquire

Is the present system or manner whereby the products of industry are distributed between the various persons and classes of the community satisfactory? Or, if not, are there any means by which that system could be improved? <sup>15</sup>

In the same year the Royal Commission on the Depression gave official recognition to unemployment and distribution of wealth as problems demanding the attention of society. The work of the Royal Commission on Housing of 1885-6 led to the Housing Act of 1890. The Board of Trade published its report on the Sweating System in East London in

1888. The Sweating Committee of 1889-90 was represented at the International Labour Conference in Berlin, and both were influential in bringing about the Royal Commission on Labour of 1890-94.

Centers of dispute in political discussion were shifting. In the early 'eighties Ireland, Egypt, and European affairs tended to sidetrack social issues in England. The realignment of parties over the Home Rule issue, the political eclipse of Dilke, and the defection of Chamberlain were further deterrents to consideration of social questions.\* But in the second half of the decade social issues, nevertheless, dominated political discussion. It was not until 1906 that a forthright program of state concern for welfare was embodied in legislation, but its lines were laid down in the years following 1885. Hesitant as Parliament was to come out clearly as a champion of social responsibility, it is nevertheless true that what was in the 'sixties a reluctant concession in a particular case had begun to be regarded by the end of the 'eighties as a principle of appeal by which other acts could be judged.

As early as 1883 Mr. Chamberlain said, speaking in Birmingham:

I do not often agree with Lord Salisbury, but I did agree with him when he said . . . that social reform was the great problem of our time and that two of the most important branches of that reform are the better provision of dwellings for the working-classes . . . and an improvement in the condition of agricultural labourers.<sup>16</sup>

Lord Salisbury himself came to believe that:

While not favouring any great scheme of State interference, he was in favour of Parliament avoiding cowardice in this matter, because there were no absolute rules or principles in politics and because material and moral laws ought to prevent the State from being indifferent to the social condition of the people.<sup>17</sup>

Herbert Spencer complained that the Liberal Party was confusing elimination of evil, its proper function, with

\* See Ch. VI, pp. 224; 230-31.

achievement of good, which lay out of its province. In 1888 Lord Wemyss bewailed to the House of Lords the fact that both parties were pandering to socialism. In the following year Sir William Harcourt made his famous statement, 'We are all Socialists now,' and Sir Charles Dilke was saying that 'We were all Tory anarchists once.' In 1890 *The Economist* lamented in connection with the Eight Hours Bill that

the men are giving up their liberty to an extent which twenty years ago would have been inconceivable, and which even now is hardly compatible with their usual sensitiveness about their independence. They are declaring that the nation has a right to fix their usual terms of labour.<sup>18</sup>

State protection had by the end of the 'eighties 'passed from the slight and grudging deviation from the principle of laissez-faire of a hesitant Parliament to the aphorism of a recent prime minister that "political machinery is only valuable and is only worth having as it is adapted to and used for worthy social ends." ' <sup>19</sup>

While Parliament, in the din of public awareness, was sharply debating each suggested extension of governmental responsibility for welfare, in the cities of England welfare governments were quietly being formed.

At first in the great industrial cities of the north—Glasgow, Birmingham, and Manchester—then in Liverpool, Huddersfield, Bradford, and Leeds, and toward the end of the 'eighties in London, the doctrine of individual responsibility was being superseded, municipal control was being put into operation, and a definite program of 'collectivism' was taking shape. In these separate municipalities where the challenge to vested interests could be fought out step by step in personal terms, rather than being resisted as a direct attack on established institutions, alternate procedures were being worked out, new institutional forms developed, and new ideas gaining support.

Since the 'thirties local government had been a testing ground, not only of the political genius of the people, but

of the two sides of the Benthamite conflict: political responsibility for welfare and economic irresponsibility. From the 'thirties to the end of the 'eighties a metropolitan area was not recognized as a governmental unit. In 1830 a rural county and parish system centering in non-elected Justices of the Peace, and an urban system, growing out of the Charters of Incorporation of medieval cities, existed side by side. The Municipal Corporation Act of 1835, following the First Reform Act, attempted to put an end to some of the abuses of this distorted system, transferring the management of public property in some two hundred towns from self-elected bodies to the ratepayers.<sup>20</sup> During the 'forties it became possible for a town to pave and drain its streets and become a sanitary authority if it wished without special act of Parliament, but the snarl of local government continued and increased, and emergencies were met not by untangling it, but by creating special agencies outside. By 1872 local government had become a chaos of such bodies. In that year, following the Second Reform Act, 'the urgent problem of drains' resulted in an Act providing some local sanitary authority for every part of the country, but the old confusions in other areas than poor relief \* and sanitation remained.

When Chadwick, Southwood Smith, and others † struggled in the 'thirties and 'forties for sanitation and civic improvements, they were fighting a losing battle against the economic anarchy of Benthamism. Joseph Chamberlain, as mayor of Birmingham in the 'seventies, carried on the fight for civic welfare at a time when the political responsibility of Benthamism was beginning to get a hearing.

During the seven years that Chamberlain flung his will and energy into municipal politics, first as mayor, then as member of the Council in Birmingham, the city entered into

\* Administration of poor relief had been unified by the Act of 1834.

† 'The battle for public libraries was fought by William Ewart . . . The "Times," in a caustic comment on the opposition to Ewart's bill, asked its readers to pity the man who out of a rental of £100 a year might have to pay eight-and-fourpence for "so utterly useless an object as a free library."' (J. L. Hammond, 'English Town Government,' *The Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 12 April 1935.)

municipal trading by purchasing the gas supply from two private companies and acquiring control of the water works, and inaugurated an extensive plan of city improvement.<sup>21</sup> The sanitary reforms achieved by Birmingham set new standards for the nation and showed what results could be accomplished by forthright social planning. The Metropolitan Water Works Purchase Bill, introduced by Mr. Cross, as Home Secretary, in 1880, derived from the innovations in Birmingham.<sup>22</sup> Of the 'progress of Birmingham' during the 'seventies and early 'eighties, Chamberlain wrote to Morley in 1883:

Putting aside personal compliments, what are the facts? A saving of seven per thousand in the death-rate—2,800 lives per annum in the town. And as five people are ill for everyone who dies, there must be a diminution of 14,000 cases of sickness, with all the loss of money, pain, and grief they involve.

Unless I can secure for the nation the results similar to these which have followed the adoption of my policy in Birmingham, it will have been a sorry exchange to give up the Town Council for the Cabinet.<sup>23</sup>

In Birmingham, by the end of the 'eighties, municipal ownership had been extended to include parks and gardens, museums, art galleries, libraries, baths, washhouses, technical schools, cattle markets, street railways, concert halls, piers, harbors, dispensaries, hospitals, and artisans' dwellings.

Such a program of responsibility appeared clearly to contemporaries as a radical departure from the individualism of the preceding generation. Throughout the 'eighties municipal control was extended step by step to one area after another; and government concern for welfare, which would have been regarded as revolutionary if attempted by Parliament, became a commonplace in the towns. Public municipal enterprises could not be carried on unless people were willing to spend money for them. In 1880 came the first successful issue of municipal stock followed by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1882. This gave such an impetus to municipal activities that by 1884 twenty-seven towns had

obtained power to issue stock and the amount of authorized municipal stock had gone up from five-and-a-quarter million to about seventy-five million;<sup>24</sup> the local government debt to the country at this time was already over one hundred million. The whole principle of English municipal government was transformed by this economic power. As Chamberlain expressed it:

The leading idea of the English system of municipal government may be that of a joint-stock or co-operative enterprise in which every citizen is a shareholder, and of which the dividends are receivable in the improved health and the increase in the comfort and happiness of the community. The members of the Council are the directors of this great business, and their fees consist in the confidence, the consideration and the gratitude of those amongst whom they live. In no other undertaking, whether philanthropic or commercial, are the returns more speedy, more manifest or more beneficial.<sup>25</sup>

The rewards of this psychology of the market place in action were not confined solely to confidence, consideration, and gratitude. The 'Six Hundred,' as the 594 persons who composed the hierarchy of government officials of Birmingham were called, were 'men devoted to Mr. Chamberlain and his friends, and who worked for them at the elections.' \*

The Royal Commission on Housing had shown in 1884 that individual initiative was not providing decent homes for the people, and had recognized the principle that cities could trade in land and houses.† To the question, 'You quite agree with giving power to a municipality to protect the accommodation for their working inhabitants?' Lord Shaftsbury replied briefly, 'No doubt.'<sup>26</sup> By 1893, following the Housing Act of 1890, over six-and-a-half million dollars had been spent by London alone in subsidizing the building of workers' homes.<sup>27</sup> By 1895 it was an accepted fact that many local authorities were providing model dwellings and lodging

\* M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, New York, Macmillan, 1902, Vol. I, p. 167. See also Ch. VI, pp. 198-201, on the development of the 'Caucus' in Birmingham.

† See Ch. IV, pp. 144-52.

houses, which were influencing all the inferior property in the neighborhood.

If cities could provide homes for workers they could, also, concern themselves with other aspects of their welfare. 'Unemployment' had become by the early 'nineties a focus of public policy. In the late 'eighties and early 'nineties the government issued to the municipalities circulars urging provision of public works for the unemployed, 'now a chronic winter feature of our great cities.'<sup>28</sup> Other innovations followed. Provision of food for destitute school children at public expense was advocated even by such a middle-of-the-road Liberal as John Morley.<sup>29</sup> Municipal inspection and control of various industrial functions was increasingly accepted. By the mid 'nineties there was even talk of municipal regulation of wages.<sup>30</sup>

Such extension of municipal powers inevitably brought questions about what kind of a government was going to exercise these powers.

'Is this a truly Radical Measure?' asked a *Fabian Tract* in 1887, concerning the official program put forth by the Radical wing of the Liberal Party:

That depends on the character of the local government. Under the present system it can only mean oppression and corruption nearer home. It is true that your representative at Westminster neglects your interests and looks after his own. But if you place your interests in the hands of your wealthy fellow townsman . . . will he prefer your interest to his own in the local governing body? He will not; and the gain in efficiency by decentralization will only mean greater efficiency of the governmental machinery for keeping down the worker . . . Such local government as they were thinking of at Nottingham is a good Liberal measure for comfortable middle-class people; the true Radical workman requires a measure of another sort.<sup>31</sup>

The non-elected Justices of the Peace still exercised administrative powers outside of narrowly defined urban limits; the urban sanitary districts of the Act of 1872 were still the old units. In arguing for a new Local Government Act, Lord Salisbury said that Parliament could not expect people

who exercised voting power in all the most important questions of the Empire to acquiesce in the doctrine that they were not fit to manage their own affairs. Sir Henry Lucy noted in his diary on 20 April 1888: 'This is the sixth night of debate on the second reading of the most important measure ever submitted to Parliament—the English Local Government Bill.'<sup>82</sup>

The Local Government Act of 1888, passed four years after the Third Reform Act enfranchising agricultural workers, transferred the administrative powers of the Justices of the Peace to councils elected for each county. This meant that there was now a system of elected local government of wide enough area to exercise the new powers and provide the new services which were coming to be recognized as municipal responsibilities.\*

The chaos in local government which led to the Act of 1888 was particularly acute in London. London was located in four different counties, and for half a century following the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 was left with no effective municipal government. Nominally governed by the Metropolitan Board of Works, it was actually subject to the graft and divided authority of this Board, the Vestries, District Boards, Poor Law Guardians, the 'Metropolitan' Asylums Board, and the School Board. As a result, specific municipal reforms came about more slowly in London than in Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, and other outlying cities. 'A single parish [could] become a plague spot in London from which disease [could] be spread all around, and the Metropolitan Authority have no authority to make the Parish do as it ought.' † But in 1883, the theory of *laissez-faire* and the individual responsibility of the Poor could no longer be allowed to interfere with the health of the city, and the benefits of hospitals for infectious diseases and of the

\* Smellie, *op. cit.* pp. 274-6. The new system of local government set up before the days of rapid transport continued some of the old difficulties, because the county areas were the areas of the historical counties.

† Sir William Harcourt speaking in the House of Commons on better government in London, quoted in Jephson, *Making of Modern London*, p. 7.



Metropolitan Asylums Board were extended. Sporadic efforts were made to remedy the 'insufficient or impure water supply' as a source of disease in the city.<sup>83</sup> But, as Gladstone pointed out:

The supply of water and the supply of gas . . . two of the most elementary among the purposes of municipal government, have been handed over to private corporations for the purpose of private profit because you have not chosen to create a complete municipality for the metropolis.<sup>84</sup>

Various specific efforts at reform served only to call attention to the inadequacy of the existing government of the sprawling city of London. In 1884 the London Government Bill was introduced, proposing to extend the Corporation of London to the whole area of the metropolis. For the next four years proposals for reform of the government of London were constant and were bitterly opposed. Such comments as the following are typical:

I would express . . . my sense of the marvellous inconsistency of British politicians who . . . propose to establish at the very heart and vitals in the Monarchy a most formidable *imperium in imperio*, a popular and Democratic community with enormous powers of taxing the richer classes, a gigantic seat of intense and interested agitation . . . a mighty fulcrum and lever for popular force . . . ; I refer to 'A bill for the Better Government of London' . . . it is no Municipal reform. It is a political and social revolution . . . Nay, why should Mayfair itself be secured against the invasion of the triumphant people? \*

The one thing certain about the proceedings of the new municipality is an enormous increase in rates.†

. . . A single municipality extended over the whole of that mighty area—could not adequately and satisfactorily perform the work expected of it . . .

\* F. Hugh O'Donnell, Esq., M.P. pamphlet, *Letter on the London Government Bill*, reprinted from the *Morning Post*, 1884.

† *Public Opinion on the London Government Bill*, reprinted from the *Evening Standard*, 9 April 1884.

That any ten of these busy and teeming hives of industry [various boroughs] . . . should be kneaded together in one municipality . . . is monstrous . . . Yet a scheme no less preposterous has found favour in the eyes of those Ministers, and of a considerable portion of their supporters, who have been so dazzled by the grandeur of the conception as to shut their eyes against its unpracticability.\*

Despite such opposition, the London County Council became a fact, the most important of the councils established under the new Local Government Act. It was described by Canon Barnett as the thing which, with the London School Board, made the greatest change in London in his lifetime. Mrs. Besant said of it, 'Now we have the machinery of social democracy.'

To the new London County Council were transferred all the duties of the Metropolitan Board of Works, as well as many wider functions. According to the Local Government Act, much of the work of the Council might be done in committees, so that men who had little time to spare from important work could serve on the Council.

As a result, an exceptionally able group was immediately elected to the London County Council. In addition to such figures as Lord Hobhouse, Lord Rosebery, Mr. George Russell, Sir Thomas Farrer, and Sir John Lubbock, a majority of progressives, many of them members of the Fabian Society, were elected. This majority was increased in 1892, and was maintained, except for one three-year period when 'progressives' and 'moderates' were balanced, until 1907. Even after 1907 the innovations made during the preceding years were not lost. Considerations of imperialism which made London conservative in national politics did not apply in local politics. The London County Council epitomized municipal reform at the end of the decade as Birmingham had at the beginning.<sup>55</sup>

The newly elected County Council 'started its career by

\* Charles MacKay, pamphlet, *The Local Government of the Metropolis*, London, Charles Skipper and East, printers (1885?).

attacking every vested interest it could discover,' \* and began a bold program for extension of education, health, housing, recreation, and transport facilities for the people, as well as concerning itself untiringly with unemployment and the question of wages and hours of municipal employees. In February 1891, the London Building Trades Council drew up a resolution in favor of the insertion in all contracts of a fair wages clause and of the prohibition of sub-letting. This was accepted by Parliament with the amendment that

. . . it is the duty of the government in all government contracts to make provision against the evils recently disclosed before the Sweating Committee; to insert such conditions as may prevent the abuse from sub-letting, and to make every effort to secure the payment of such wages as are generally accepted as current in such trades for competent workers.<sup>86</sup>

Such a resolution would have been unthinkable in 1881 and in it the influence of the London County Council is clearly apparent. The vigorous attack on such local problems suggests the amount of energy which was being deliberately diverted from parliamentary politics in the belief that more could be accomplished in the cities.

Inevitably, with such achievements and proposals the London County Council became a rallying-point for those who desired extension of welfare government and a target for die-hard opponents. *Reynolds' Newspaper* urged continually that 'The London County Council must be made to feel that its true function is not merely that of a huge administrative board but a genuine Parliament or Home Rule Legislation for the Metropolis.'<sup>87</sup>

*The Times* was emphatic in denunciation of any such policy. The weekly meetings of the Council were reported with such editorial comments as the following:

. . . It is very probable that a local authority will make a bad landlord . . . But the County Council is not afflicted with diffi-

\* A. Emil Davies, 'London Pride,' *The New Statesman and Nation*, 8 April 1939, p. 552. John Burns entered the Council with the motto of 'practical socialism.'

dence concerning its own capacity to reform the world, and no one need be at all surprised if it should develop an ambition to rank among the great ground landlords of London . . .<sup>38</sup>

This editorial continued with a denunciation of Mr. Fleming Williams for suggesting that the Council give an address of welcome to Henry M. Stanley, then returning from Africa:

He has not grasped the distinction between a body which is elected and a body which is representative of those elements in society whose welcome a man of Mr. Stanley's temperament and experience is likely to prize.<sup>39</sup>

Four years later the Final Report of the Royal Commission of Labour quoted more specific condemnation:

By a series of resolutions, [Sir Thomas Farrer] said, passed between October, 1890, and November, 1892, the London County Council had abolished overtime and limited the working week of its employes in the parks, gardens, and open spaces to six days, except in cases of absolute necessity, and . . . it has increased the rates of wages to an extent sufficient to cause an addition to the wage-bill of between £5,000 and £6,000 a year. In so doing, the Council has adopted the principle of a minimum rate of 6d. per hour, without reference to the value of the work performed . . . In short, desiring by its example to raise wages throughout the industrial world, the London County Council has adopted a policy that would involve a private firm in bankruptcy . . . in other words, it is impossible to divide a shilling amongst 12 men in such a way as to give 2d. to each.<sup>40</sup>

The Acts of Parliament shifting emphasis from preventing bad government to planning good government, as well as the extension of municipal responsibility, were, in many cases, *ad hoc* measures rather than the expression of any clear policy. Among the signs of change in the 'eighties, however, were definite statements of the newer social philosophy that was emerging: the doctrine of 'collectivism,' with explicit formulations of various types of socialism. Furthermore, there was general recognition that the new doctrine was gaining in power.

Persons who advocated a general 'collectivist' doctrine and yet did not regard themselves as socialists had certain things in common. They believed that science in modern industrial society dictated organization, collectivism, as over against individual atomism, particularly in bargaining; this involved restriction on freedom of contract, an attempt to equalize advantage among individuals, and extension of protection to the unable. Variations on these themes appear:

We believe that the economic well-being of society is the true end of industry . . . this end will be reached better by intelligent organization of industry than by the haphazard interaction of unintelligent forces . . . self-interest acts intelligently enough for self, but totally disregards the welfare of others . . . [There is] no pre-established 'common harmony' between self-interest and the common weal . . . intelligence is more effective than brute matter, and . . . the control of the community is the only possible intelligent agency which can direct the course of economic progress.<sup>41</sup>

. . . Every worker, without exception must receive as the product of his labour all the essentials of a healthy and happy life . . . This must be a first charge on the labour of the community; till this is produced there must be no labour expended on luxury, no private accumulations of wealth . . .<sup>42</sup>

Emile de Laveleye, in combating the 'so-called laws of political economy,' taking sharp issue with Spencer's 'old-fashioned political economy' which held 'the law of the survival of the fittest could be applied to human societies,' maintained that:

It is not true that liberty must be surrendered in proportion as material well-being is cared for. On the contrary, a certain degree of well-being is a necessary condition of liberty; it is a mockery to call a man free who by labour cannot secure the necessities of existence. Political economy and evolutionary science teach us that these miseries are the inevitable and beneficent consequences of natural laws. Scientific Socialism . . . seeks so to raise the standards of the working classes that they can help themselves: to find out what laws are most in conformity with

absolute justice. The state should use its legitimate powers for greater equality among men . . .<sup>48</sup>

The questioning of economic individualism and the growth of collectivism received support from the neo-Hegelian philosophers in English universities. Halévy is certainly over-stating this influence when he attributes British social legislation, Fabian politics, and the development of the collectivist ideal to German state socialism and Hegelian philosophy.<sup>44</sup> But it is true that, at a time when the doctrines of economic liberalism were losing their authority, formulations of a positive concept of society in relation to individuals by Green, Caird, Ritchie, Bosanquet, and MacTaggart did much to quicken and give shape to changing concepts of freedom.

T. H. Green began to teach at Oxford in 1866, when economic liberalism was almost universally accepted. He and Ritchie did much to suggest to Toynbee and others at Oxford and to Sidney Webb, among those outside the university, alternatives to the classical doctrine. In at least three ways they affected the transition. They asserted: (1) that material reality was not all of reality; (2) that freedom and authority are not necessarily antithetical, and that certain kinds of authority may enhance freedom; (3) that certain activities of the State are desirable for the sake of positive individual freedom.

Since Ritchie was more active in polemical writing than Green, certain of their views opposing economic liberalism stand out more clearly in his work:

Mill and all those who take up his attitude toward the State, seem to assume that all power gained by the State is so much taken from the individual; and, conversely, that all power gained by the individual is gained at the expense of the State. Now this is to treat the two elements, power of the State and power (or liberty) of the individual, as if they formed the debit and credit sides of an account book, it is to make them like two heaps of a fixed number of stones, to neither of which you can add without taking from the other. It is to apply a mere quantitative

conception in politics . . . The Citizen of a State, the member of a society of any sort, even an artificial or temporary association, does not stand in the same relation to the whole that one number does to a series of numbers, or that one stone does to a heap of stones.\*

But there are many, even of our most Radical politicians, who while allowing or encouraging trade unions to struggle for higher wages and a reduction of the hours of labour, object to the State meddling at all in the matter except in the case of women and children . . . Adults are to be left to shift for themselves. Well, we know what that means . . . This system of unchecked competition . . . means a prodigal and frightful waste. Some have to work too hard and too long; others cannot get any work to do at all or get it irregularly and uncertainly; others who might work, do not and will not—the idlers at both ends of the social scale, the moral refuse produced by our economic system. This system is exactly what we find in nature generally; but . . . Cannot human societies imitate the higher forms of nature, not the lower, so as to contrive some scheme for the diminution of waste? <sup>45</sup>

State action [Green holds] is expedient just in so far as it tends to promote 'freedom' in the sense of self-determined action directed to the objects of reason, inexpedient so far as it tends to interfere with this.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to this general conception that developing a social structure which would support and enrich individual lives was desirable, there had also appeared by the end of the 'eighties more explicit statements of different forms of socialism.

These different formulations of 'socialist' doctrine had certain things in common: Against the idea that equality of opportunity existed and that under free play of supply and demand awards were proportionate to personal merit, socialists maintained that the present economic organization was based upon and increased inequality among men. To the

\* David G. Ritchie, *The Principles of State Interference*, London, Swan Sonnenschein, 1891, pp. 12-13. See Ch. III, pp. 99-103, for the extent to which this was a misinterpretation of Mill.

idea that the condition of the laborers was their own responsibility and their own fault, that survival of the fittest prevailed and should prevail in human affairs, that complete independence and competitive struggle had a moral value, socialists opposed insistence on an adequate physical and economic basis for life as an indispensable condition for equality, freedom, and the attainment of human values. Instead of exalting the benefits of suffering, they maintained that human suffering is undesirable and that it is a responsibility of the State to eliminate its social causes in so far as possible. They insisted that it was nonsense to talk of equality in terms of a laborer's being able to bargain equally with his employer, that in a highly organized economic society it is necessary for inequalities to be mitigated by planning and combination. And, finally, in opposition to the doctrine that the law of nature cannot and should not be controverted, they maintained that unrestrained natural forces breed misery and chaos, and that intelligent planning is better than blind force in human affairs.

Despite this common ground, however, the various English schools of socialism did not produce the kind of clear statement of theoretical creed characteristic of some French and German socialists. Continental socialism was influential in England in stimulating a general awareness of problems rather than in furnishing specific formulas for their solution. Thorold Rogers was probably exaggerating when he wrote in 1885 that ' . . . the English nation has not taken a single step in the direction of . . . Continental Socialism.' <sup>47</sup> But the statement made four years earlier by John Rae still held in the mid 'eighties: 'It is a curious circumstance that the country where Karl Marx is least known is that in which he has for the last thirty years lived and worked . . . Democratic Socialism . . . has as yet taken no hold on the interest of the English-speaking populations.' <sup>48</sup>

Volume I of *Capital* was first published in English in 1886. In 1881 Hyndman had published *Text-Book of Democracy: England for All*, making use of various Marxian concepts, but without crediting Marx with them. *The Economist*



did not review the English translation of *Capital*; it referred slightly to Marx in a review of Thomas Kirkup's *Inquiry Into Socialism* in 1888;<sup>49</sup> and it made no reference to Marx in a review of Thorold Rogers's *An Economic Interpretation of History* in the following year.<sup>50</sup> But W. H. Mallock, writing in 1881 on his favorite theme, inequality as a necessary basis for well-being and private property as a basis for inequality, referred twice to Marx:

The Conservative says that all leaders of the modern movement from Rousseau to Karl Marx have made the fatal error of deceiving the masses into struggling for the unobtainable.<sup>51</sup>

The Conservative says Social science is in our country where physical science was at the dawn of Greek philosophy. Karl Marx . . . is . . . in a position like that of Thales . . . a great collector of facts, but he knows not how to read them.<sup>52</sup>

Among British economists discussions of Marxian theory centered in questions of whether Marx was right in perpetuating and elaborating Ricardo's labor theory of value, or Jevons was right in disputing it; whether there was anything in Marx's condemnation of private enterprise and in his theory of collectivism which was not already beginning to be tacitly, and more soundly, expounded by such economists as Mill, Cairnes, and Sidgwick—if not Marshall—as well as by Ruskin and the survivors of the Christian Socialists; whether it was possible to accept certain parts of Marx's analysis without regarding him as 'pope, prophet, and Messiah,' as did his more ardent British followers.<sup>53</sup>

Orthodox Marxists in the 'eighties were few in number, but Marxian thought was influential beyond this group. Bernard Shaw, in a review of *Capital* in *The National Reformer* in 1887, contrasted Marx with the orthodox political economists in his influence on contemporary thought:

There is none of this futile retrogressiveness in Marx . . . his cry to the present is always, 'Pass by; we are waiting for the future.' Nor is the future at all mysterious, uncertain, or dreadful to him. There is not a word of hope, or fear, no appeal to chance or providence, nor vain remonstrance with nature, nor

optimism, nor enthusiasm, nor pessimism, nor cynicism, nor any other familiar sign of the giddiness which seizes men when they climb to heights, which command a view of the past, present, and future of human society. Marx keeps his head like a God . . . Obviously, such a man . . . would, without necessarily introducing a single economic doctrine new to students of Mill, Cairnes, Marshall, Walker, and Sidgwick, yet make such an impression as these writers . . . have never achieved. Compare Mr. William Morris after Oxford, or Mr. H. M. Hyndman after Cambridge, with the same gentlemen after Marx. In the first stage they are conscious of having been incommoded by a useless dose of 'the dismal science.' In the second they are crying out with a burning conviction that the old order is one of fraud and murder; . . .

Whatever may be the ultimate verdict as to Marx, it must be borne in mind that the extraordinary impression he makes does not depend on the soundness of his views, but on their magnificent scope and on his own imperturbable conviction of their validity.<sup>54</sup>

The program and the operation of the three leading socialist groups in England—the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League, and the Fabian Society—will be discussed later.\* It is sufficient to point out here that these organizations were putting out explicit programs of socialism and working for their realization, and that they were widely influential on other groups and individuals who did not use the socialist label.

Chamberlain's tempestuous energy and Morley's more detached but uncompromising Radicalism combined in the *Radical Programme*, published in 1885.† This *Programme* in its close parallelism not only to the program of the Fabian Society, but also to that of the Social Democratic Federation, suggests both the extent to which contemporary socialistic ideas entered into all proposals for reform, and the essen-

\* See Ch. x.

† *The Radical Programme*, with a Preface by the Right Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P., London, Chapman and Hall, 1885. The substance of this book was first published as articles in the *Fortnightly Review*. In 1932 Sidney Webb described Chamberlain's *Radical Programme* as 'not socialism at all—just old-fashioned radicalism.'

tially moderate, democratic character of British socialism. The preface states:

The Reform Acts of 1884 have set the seal on the great change which the Reform Act of 1832 inaugurated . . .

Radicalism, which has been the creed of the most numerous section of the Liberal party outside the House of Commons, will henceforth be a powerful factor inside the walls of the popular Chamber.

The stage of agitation has passed, and the time for action has come.

New conceptions of public duty, new developments of social enterprise, new estimates of the natural obligations of the members of the community to one another, have come into view, and demand consideration.<sup>55</sup>

The *Programme* goes on to advocate the establishment of rural municipalities, land reform under state regulation,<sup>56</sup> housing reform, more equitable taxation, and acceleration of legislation to these ends.<sup>57</sup> It describes these measures as 'socialist legislation':

[These measures] sound the death-knell of the *laissez-faire* system . . . If it be said that this is communism, the answer is that it is not. If it be said that it is legislation with a socialist tendency, the impeachment may readily be admitted. Between such legislation and communism there is all the difference in the world. Communism means the reduction of everything to a dead level, the destruction of private adventure, the paralysis of private industry, the atrophy of private effort. The socialistic measures now contemplated would preserve in their normal vigour and freshness all the individual activities of English citizenship, and would do nothing more spoliatory than tax—if and in what degree necessary—aggregations of wealth for the good of the community.<sup>58</sup>

This will be called Socialism with a vengeance, but . . . the path of legislative progress in England has been for years, and must continue to be, distinctly Socialistic. It is the general business of the State, not merely in the cases reviewed in the foregoing pages, but in others like them, to convince the possessors of wealth, and the holders of property, whether in country or

in town, that they cannot escape the responsibilities of trusteeship, and that, if the State is to guarantee them security of tenure, they must be ready to discharge certain definite obligations.<sup>59</sup>

Consistently in his public utterances Chamberlain opposed a policy of economic individualism and insisted that 'the interests of life must prevail over those of property.'

Orthodox economists talk of 'natural' causes . . .

I cannot call it a natural cause when I find a system under which the labourer is content to work for ten or twelve hours a day for ten shillings a week, and with no hope, no prospect, for the termination of his career except a death in the hospital or the poorhouse. If the life of the labourer were more tolerable would he be so ready to fly from it? <sup>60</sup>

I have been the subject of torrents of abuse and of whirlwinds of invective . . . [In the view of my critics] The working classes of this country are to continue in the future as they have in the past—to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters and to do their duty to the state of life to which it shall please God to call them . . . The proposals which I have made are not directed against any class or any individual. I have had two objects in view. In the first place I want to see that the burthen of taxation is distributed according to the ability of the taxpayer, and in the second place I want to increase the production of the land . . . All this clamour about confiscation and blackmail and plunder is so much dust raised by men who are interested in maintaining the present system . . .

If it be blackmail to propose that the rich should pay taxation in equal proportion to the poor, what word is strong enough to describe the present system under which the poor pay more than the rich? <sup>61</sup>

John Rae commented on Chamberlain's position that 'No reasonable person will find fault with the actual proposals of social reform put forward by Mr. Chamberlain, for he is far from Socialist in the substance of his proposals.' <sup>62</sup> But he was widely denounced as a socialist at the time and Francis W. Hirst, a nineteenth-century Liberal surviving into the twentieth century, wrote of his 1885 Birmingham speech:

[He started] . . . with a doctrine which was thought subversive to society—that all men were born with natural rights to land, and that owners of property should pay ransom for the security they enjoy. It is the sort of thing that an undergraduate might write, if he were told to blend Rousseau with Lenin and apply the mixture to England. But, as it is the only attempt Chamberlain ever made to lay a philosophic basis for his Radical programme, it deserves attention . . .

As a Burkian and a Benthamite, Morley says he was as much dismayed by Chamberlain's appeal to Nature 'as if I had seen deinotherion shambling down Parliament street to a seat in the House of Commons.' <sup>63</sup>

But Hirst's hero, Morley, also reflected the changes of the times; no one could seriously call Morley a socialist, but although scorned by socialists as a milk-and-water liberal he was denounced by conservatives as a dangerous radical. His speech at the Eighty Club in 1889 was condemned editorially by *The Times* as time-serving and political and setting dangerous precedents. Said *The Times*:

If we are to rear and educate other people's children for nothing, why not clothe them too and start them up in business? Where is the eleemosynary business to stop . . . ? <sup>64</sup>

[Mr. Morley's] view is . . . that our population has now grown so enormous in relation to our old machinery that we must recognize the obligations, in one form or another, of government. <sup>65</sup>

Others, who allied themselves with no school of socialism, nevertheless put forward proposals regarded by their contemporaries as definitely socialistic. At the sessions of the Royal Commission on Labour in the early 'nineties, it was not only Hyndman representing the Social Democratic Federation, and Sidney Webb, representing the Fabian Society, but Tom Mann, educated on the Co-operative Movement and Henry George, representing labor, who advocated the use of state power for the welfare of all the people. Grilled day after day by the examiners, Mann consistently main-

tained this position as one problem after another was under discussion: \*

Under the present very sectionalized system of conducting trade each little group of employers, or each individual employer must necessarily control his own establishment with a view to making profits, and as trade fluctuates in his particular department it is the custom to discharge if trade falls off . . . Industries . . . controlled by the municipality . . . would be able to dovetail the interests of the various sections and distribute the bad effects of declining trade . . . over a larger number than is possible under the present system.<sup>66</sup>

. . . I want to see trade steadied. I want to see a secure income for every member of the community . . .<sup>67</sup>

. . . the same trade of the port . . . [of London] can be conducted . . . better, and practically permanent employment can be guaranteed . . . we must make the dock accommodation more compact than it now is, and . . . we shall get rid of the sectional interests that now exist . . . That must be changed for some common authority . . .<sup>68</sup>

. . . I want to contend . . . for that common responsibility on the part of each municipality, or on the part of the State, to see to it, that every honest individual capable of work and desirous of getting work shall be afforded an opportunity to obtain work.<sup>69</sup>

Sidney Webb before the Royal Commission was able to call to his support men who could not by any stretch of the imagination be called socialists. He quoted Morley as saying that 'unfettered individual competition is not a principle to which regulation of industry may be trusted';<sup>70</sup> and he cited Charles Booth's description of certain sections of East London as 'these plague spots of an unregulated individualism.'<sup>71</sup>

Webb, with his 'patient air of a man expounding arithmetic to backward children,' maintained the necessity of economic collectivism as an inevitable outcome of political democracy under sharp attack from such economic individ-

\* Tom Mann was for a time a member of the Fabian Society, but was more a representative of labor than of the Fabian group.

ualists as the Rt. Hon. Leonard Courtney, M.P., Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, and Professor Alfred Marshall:

*Ques.* You think there are trades where the adoption of the eight hours' day would be prejudicial to the carrying on of that trade? *Ans.* I think there have been. The classic instance is pyramid making . . . The making of pyramids was an industry pursued in Egypt in olden times, which I believe died out as soon as the workers had to be treated as human beings; and it is possible that there are such trades now which only continue to exist, because the workers can only be got on terms which are not compatible with civilized existence.

I have never been able to see any reason why London should be almost the only great port in the world which abandons its docks to private enterprise and individual competition. I strongly feel that the docks of London ought to be under . . . the public in some form or another . . . in order that they may be carried on with primary reference to the benefit of the people of London, instead of being carried on with primary reference to the benefit of the shareholders.<sup>72</sup>

*Ques.* So that you contemplate the possibility of a man being a small freeholder or a large freeholder, as the case may be, having his own house or cottage gradually taken from him by an increase of rates, and transferred to the municipal authorities? *Ans.* I should contemplate that the amount which that occupying owner would have to pay in rates would become very considerable, might even amount to what one would call the economic rent of that property. If the community wanted those services, and if the community was not acting arbitrarily, if the taxation was equal all round and if it was arrived at gradually, I confess I should view with equanimity the result that the man might have to work for his living.<sup>73</sup>

*Ques.* What makes you think [collectivism] is the economic obverse of democracy? *Ans.* It appears to me that if you allow the tramway conductor a vote he will not for ever be satisfied with exercising that vote over such matters as the appointment of the Ambassador to Paris, or even the position of the franchise. He will realize that the forces which keep him at work for 16 hours a day for 3s. a day are not the forces of hostile kings, or nobles, or priests; but whatever forces they are he will, it seems

to me, seek so far as possible to control them by his vote. That is to say, he will more and more seek to convert his political democracy into what one may roughly term an industrial democracy, so that he may obtain some kind of control as a voter over the conditions under which he lives.<sup>74</sup>

*Ques.* Do you consider that the position of the workers in this country has materially improved during the last 50 years?

*Ans.* That is part of my argument—concomitantly with the growing increase of collectivism.<sup>75</sup>

*Ques.* (Professor Marshall examining) I share those hopes to a considerable extent, but is it not rash to make a law when we can do without a law, so long as the history of the past, in so far as it does indicate the future, shows that where you have bureaucracy there you will not have progress? *Ans.* I am afraid I cannot accept that statement . . . I entirely agree with the old position that a law is an evil which should be avoided where it can be avoided without greater evil; but, of course, the case of those who ask for a legal shortening of the hours of labour is that the evil which will result without the law is greater than the evil which the law would cause.<sup>76</sup>

Traces of the collectivist position set forth by Mann and Webb, and by Hyndman, appear in the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, signed, in addition to Tom Mann, by Mr. William Abraham, M.P., Mr. Michael Austin, M.P., secretary of the Irish Democratic Labour Federation, and Mr. James Mawdsley, who was at once a popular railroad labor leader and a member of the Conservative Party. This Report, after making specific recommendations in regard to sweated labor, hours of labor, and unemployment, stated that:

So long as the mass of the working population remain in their present economic condition, we see no prospect of entirely preventing the dislocation and suffering caused by strikes and lock-outs. We believe that so long as industry is carried on, not with a view to public needs, but for the sake of private profit, and so long as the land, the mines, and the instruments of production are in unrestrained individual ownership, it will be impossible to avoid industrial disputes.<sup>77</sup>



The roots of socialist doctrine as it was taking shape in the 'eighties were clearly at least as much democratic and humanitarian as economic. Ruskin and Kingsley and Bentham and Mill contributed as much to it as Marx. Socialists of this period were more concerned with a series of specific reforms than with any integrated program of social change. The direct influence of any surviving Chartists was slight, but the points of the democratic People's Charter appeared in every socialist program.

To critics of socialism, these doctrines appeared as an 'incompetent, hysterical, improvident obtaining of plunder,'<sup>78</sup>—the height of folly. *The Economist*, quick to recognize the class sabotage represented in 'socialistic' proposals coming from a prominent political leader, remonstrated with Chamberlain:

Mr. Chamberlain, of course, knows perfectly well the value of the institution of private property, and he is not going to commit political suicide by joining the movement for the nationalization of the land, which will, sooner or later, incorporate among its aims the nationalization of . . . capital . . . The President of the Board of Trade would do well to reflect seriously, whether the few stray votes which he secures by performances of this kind [Birmingham speech] are worth the cost which he pays for them, in the steady falling away of his own reputation, and the growing alienation of his more sober-minded supporters.<sup>79</sup>

Opponents of socialism who regarded themselves, also, as radical critics of society greeted socialists thankfully as swelling the demand for reform but took exception to what they regarded as too sweeping proposals, intolerable personal tyranny, and dreary uniformity and dullness. They desired a mixed economy 'to cleanse, repair, and strengthen private property by restraining excesses which Parliaments of great proprietors have sanctioned.'

In the clash among social philosophies in the 'eighties there was no doubt among any group, whatever their own beliefs, that collectivism or socialism, as a creed, was gaining

at the expense of individualism. The word 'collectivism' did not appear in Murray's dictionary until 1880. It was defined as

the socialistic theory of the collective ownership or control of all the means of production, and especially of the land, by the whole community or State, i.e., the people collectively, for the benefit of the people as a whole.

By the end of the 'eighties it was in common use.

When Jevons in the early 'seventies had ventured in public lecture as well as in private correspondence to question the supremacy of Mill's liberalism, as usually interpreted, he regarded himself as a lone apostate among a host of believers. In 1875, however, he wrote that he thought a considerable change of opinion was taking place in England.<sup>80</sup> In 1883, Emile de Laveleye went so far as to affirm, perhaps over-optimistically from his point of view, that

. . . Among the 'favoured ones' of Society, as it exists at the present day, the number of those who believe that the 'natural laws,' if left to themselves, will set all things to rights, is daily diminishing. Nearly all admit that something may be done to improve the condition of the working classes. Those who think, with Gambetta, that there is no social question, are rare . . .<sup>81</sup>

Frederic Harrison, writing in 1889, expressed the belief that the change began even earlier:

Thirty years ago . . . the old orthodox Economy was dominant; it received the superstitious veneration of the whole capitalist class; and it more or less overawed the leaders of the labouring class . . . Thirty years ago Socialism was a mere outlandish day-dream. It is now . . . a very real force. And it has killed the old Targum about Supply and Demand—the plain English of which was 'May the devil take the weakest!' <sup>82</sup>

In 1888 Kier Hardie wrote in a letter to the Editor of the *Labour Elector*:

With such an immense army of the unemployed, and the growing helplessness of those in work, men are beginning to realize that the *laissez-faire* doctrine is about played out . . . and that

if Parliament is to justify its existence it must grapple with the 'condition of the people' question.<sup>83</sup>

Such statements might be regarded as the hopeful dreams of a small group whose wish gave substance to their thought; but, in the course of the 'eighties the 'doctrines of political economy,' even among their strongest advocates, wore increasingly the aspect of a beleaguered citadel to be defended, rather than a firm foundation to be built upon.

Mackay, in discussing the relation of changed public opinion to the Poor Law, asserted that:

This decay of Liberalism, in the older sense of the term, this scepticism as to the magic of a once revered creed, has paralysed the progress of a Poor Law policy that drew its inspiration from that earlier doctrine . . .<sup>84</sup>

In 1890 *The Times* protested:

Thanks to the combined operations of trade unions, County Councils, amateur arbitrators, and other nuisances, the field for the employment of capital in this country is becoming seriously restricted.<sup>85</sup>

W. H. Mallock, in his efforts to combat the subversive teachings of Henry George, said in the Preface to *Property and Progress*:

One of the principal features by which Continental politics have been, during modern times, distinguished from those of England, has, during the last few years, developed itself in England also. I refer to the attempts being now made by extreme Radicals on the one hand, and avowed Socialists on the other, to identify politics, in the minds of the poorer classes, with some wholesale seizure, in their behalf, of the property, . . . of the richer; to represent the accomplishment of such a seizure, as the main task incumbent on a really popular government; and to madden the people with a conviction, that, until the seizure is made, they will be suffering a chronic wrong.<sup>86</sup>

Observers, summarizing the trends of their times at the end of the 'eighties, recognized that they had seen inaugurated a revolution in social philosophy.



■

PART II

ROLE OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS  
IN CHANGE

■



## VI. *Political Parties*

HISTORY has frequently been written as the record of past politics—interpreted as shifts in the persons or groups who hold power. But as we turn to a study of such movements in the 'eighties we realize that understanding of historical change is not to be found in the history of the people who held formal political power. Political leaders and political parties acted as barometers of change, rarely as initiators of change.

As a matter of fact, in England, the great country of 'constitutionalism' and 'moderation,' major changes in institutions had always been brought about by pressure from organizations outside Parliament and outside the constitution. Religious freedom in 1829, parliamentary reform in 1832, removal of trade restrictions in 1846, were all obtained through such extra-constitutional organizations. 'On each occasion their interference . . . assumed the aspect of an exceptional case justified by the quasi-revolutionary features of the situation; that is that public opinion was not allowed to assert itself freely and fully within the boundaries of the constitution.'<sup>1</sup>

Political parties themselves had originated in special situations as the personal following of rivals who fought an election duel, and were originally known by the names of the persons they supported. By the 'eighties Conservative and Liberal parties had become an established interposition between the electorate and the constitution.<sup>2</sup> Though still extra-constitutional, they had a vested authority of their own. Innovation again came from outside. Expression of dissident opinion was voiced by maverick or heretical

groups, or individuals outside the main body of the two major parties; or by an upstart group such as the Irish Party, which was at first regarded as an unimportant excrescence, an inconsequential 'Third Party'; or by vocal and insurgent groups completely outside Parliament.

The decade opened with optimism about the possibilities of 'political' action and political parties. Extension of political democracy had seemed to be England's way of solving her problems, and political parties could be used as the instruments of democracy. Thirteen years before, the electorate had been nearly doubled; and there had been created two Englands, a democratic England of the cities and an aristocratic England of the shires. There was already expectation that further electoral reform would change this situation; and in 1884 and 1885 a Reform Bill and a Redistribution Bill, passed by the Liberals with Conservative acquiescence, extended the franchise to agricultural workers, and further increased the electorate by two-thirds.\*

In 1880, despite pessimism over bad harvests and industrial depression, 'progress' and advancing 'democracy' were words of confidence. But England—in all classes—was uncertain what to do with this new democracy. Nobody knew what things in the English way of life could still be taken for granted, with political democracy as a threatening or as a pleasant addition to them, according to one's point of view, or what things might be basically changed. Before 1832, and to some extent until 1867, 'the division into political parties in no way impaired the homogeneousness of the whole body, it only . . . preserved cohesion in the ranks . . . Whigs and Tories in Parliament were animated by the same spirit and the same passions.'<sup>4</sup> But now no one knew whether the old authoritarian class structure of British society, with the two major parties playing out their game within the same set of accepted rules, would remain, or whether the new electorate would alter the premises and the

\* The Reform Act of 1867 increased the electorate from 1,056,659 to 1,995,086, or 88 per cent, the Reform Act of 1884 increased the electorate from 2,618,453 to 4,380,540, 67 per cent.



aims of the game. Political leaders, of whatever views, were still not sure how seriously to take the new voters—either how to use, or how effectively to turn the edge of, their power.

Political changes of the past fifty years had left central features of the British government largely untouched. A vigorous republican movement of the late 'seventies, supported by Sir Charles Dilke, *Reynolds' Newspaper*, and the *Newcastle Chronicle*, had practically disappeared by the end of the 'eighties, leaving no permanent mark on the monarchy or the House of Lords. Through the 'eighties *Reynolds'* continued to protest against the 'pensions and places . . . given with a free hand to a pack of shameless beggars,' and against 'families that have been accustomed for generations to quarter themselves on the public':<sup>4</sup>

The conduct of the Queen during the Ministerial crisis is deserving of the highest censure. It was her bounden duty, on receiving from Mr. Gladstone the notification of his resignation to have immediately returned from Balmoral to London or Windsor . . . That she is dropsical, somewhat unwieldy, and unable to stand upon her legs, may be accepted as excuses for not more frequently holding levees . . . but nothing can justify such selfish and capricious conduct as refusing to return . . . where duty calls her.<sup>5</sup>

The House of Lords was more obstructionist and more on the defensive than the Crown. With the Reform Bill of 1884 imminent, the Lords hoped to force a dissolution, but Gladstone refused to dissolve except on the question of the position of the House of Lords in the Constitution. During the next twenty years the Commons became more and more restive under 'the brake of privilege' the Lords applied.

The House of Commons itself was not immediately or greatly altered by the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884. Paley's description of the House of Commons at the end of the eighteenth century reflected the idea that the wealth and influence of the Crown must at least be balanced by the wealth and influence of Parliament:

[The House is] composed of 548 members, in which number are found the most considerable landowners and merchants of the kingdom; the heads of the army, the navy, and the law; the occupiers of great offices in the State; together with many private individuals, eminent by their knowledge, eloquence, or activity. Now, if the country be not safe in such hands, in whose may it confide its interests? If such a number of men be liable to the influence of corrupt motives, what assembly of men will be secure from the same danger? Does any new scheme of representation promise to collect together more wisdom, or to produce firmer integrity? \*

This view also involves the assumption that 'eminent' men—great landowners, merchants, the heads of army, navy, and law—are not subject to corrupt motives, ignoring the tendency for the class in power to view its motives as incorruptible and its interests as synonymous with the public interest.

The Reform Act of 1832 had brought more merchants and industrialists to the House of Commons. But from that time until the Labour Party shared in the Liberal victory in 1906, there was no great change in the character of the House.<sup>7</sup> By the 'eighties the House of Commons had 670 members. In 1880, as in 1865, 250 members had attended one of the great public schools or had gone to Oxford or Cambridge, and 80 had held positions in the army or navy; in 1880, 112 were engaged in manufacture or trade, an increase of 22 since 1860. The heirs to peerages dropped from 108 in 1860 to 51 in 1897.<sup>8</sup> The fact that the Chartist demand for payment of members of Parliament had not yet been won meant that many of the newly enfranchised electors could not afford to contest seats, although the Corrupt Practices Act in 1883 enabled men of moderate means to run for Parliament, or even some men of no means, if they represented a cause for which subscriptions could be raised.\*

Until 1906, moreover, the broadening of the franchise and improved educational facilities 'had not, in one hundred years of cabinet history, seriously affected the hold of the

\* Smellie, *op. cit.* p. 198. See Ch. VII, pp. 271-4, for the isolated labor members in Parliament as Liberals.

aristocracy upon the pivotal posts of government.' \* No very considerable difference existed in this respect between the Liberal and Conservative parties; before 1906 very few professions had been represented in the Cabinet.†

Uncertainty about the new enlarged electorate, combined with extension of governmental functions, led to a strengthening of the fixed points of dependability in the government: the Cabinet and the Civil Service. Although the word Cabinet was not actually used in any official document until 1900, members of the Privy Council acting as a Cabinet were during the 'eighties and 'nineties constantly enlarging the range of their power. Since 'wealth and position' were beginning to be threatened in the House of Commons, their authority could be strengthened in the Cabinet.‡

Strengthening of the fixed points in the government was greatly facilitated by the development of the Civil Service. After 1832 it had been impossible 'that the old system of nomination and patronage by which the public services were the outdoor-relief department of the aristocracy should continue.'<sup>9</sup> With the feeling against feudal localism and the enlarged scale of government, ministries felt the need for more expert service and *business-like* efficiency. Had the

\* Harold Laski, 'The Personnel of the English Cabinet 1801-1924,' *American Political Science Review*, February 1928, Vol. 22, pp 12-31.

Of 69 Ministers who held office between 1885 and 1905, 40 were sons of nobility; while even between 1906 and 1916, 25 out of 51 Ministers were sons of nobility; in the period 1917-24, which included the first Labour Government, there were 14 aristocrats out of 52 Ministers; in the period 1801 to 1924, 306 persons held Cabinet office, and of them 182 were aristocrats. 'The National Government which appoints 11 aristocrats or relations of aristocrats to a Cabinet of 21, is continuing the century-old Tory tradition of rule by the Great Families.' (Ibid.)

† 'Outside the rentiers, practically five categories exhaust the list. No scientist, no engineer, and no doctor has ever been a member of the Cabinet; and, with [one] exception . . . no academic person . . . The three reform acts of the nineteenth century had little effect upon the position of the aristocracy in politics . . . Even today, the aristocracy, together with the lawyer and the rentier, possesses a predominance in the personnel of English politics.' (Laski, op. cit.)

‡ Garvin notes that the great question of the extension of the franchise to rural workers was virtually settled in the Cabinet by the end of November 1883. (Garvin, *Chamberlain*, Vol. 1, p. 400.)

government not become more efficient, business would even then have taken over more of the functions of government. Medicine, engineering, the law were being 'modernized'; the development of organized professions in all branches of knowledge compelled some professionalizing of the craft of government. Between the 'thirties and the 'eighties the Civil Service developed somewhat independently, being rescued from private patronage before there was danger of its becoming a matter of public spoils. The recommendations of the Northcote and Trevelyan Report on Civil Service in 1853 for competitive examination as a basis of selection for government posts were not fully applied until 1870. An Order of Council of that year made a competitive examination obligatory for admission to certain important departments. This had two significant results: it made it possible for men of ability, such as Sidney Webb and Sydney Oliver, to hold government positions without the nomination of influential persons; and, at the same time, it widened the gap between expert and informed government officials and the untutored desires of the multitude.

This greater concentration of power within the government was matched by new agencies of extended popular appeal to the voters. Informal political clubs in England had grown up with the Coffee Houses and had been active since the seventeenth century. But it was only after the First Reform Act that central party organizations, the Carlton Club of the Tories and the Reform Club of the Liberals, developed 'a sort of electoral labour exchange,'<sup>10</sup> replacing the earlier buying and selling of votes in the political market. In the 'fifties and 'sixties these were supplemented by Registration Societies, which not only made registration of voters and bringing non-resident voters to the polls more systematic, but also recommended Parliamentary candidates. Even before the Reform Act of 1867 these various associations were regarded as a threat to free expression of opinion at the polls, since they were organizations interposed between the constitution and the people, and were primarily organs of partisan party interests.

But the Second Reform Act, while remedying some of the defects in the system of registration, set an even greater premium on party maneuvers and tight party organization. The provision in the Act for the representation of minorities was an extension of democracy through individual expression as interpreted by Mill, but a threat to democracy through party organization as interpreted by Bright and Chamberlain. Bright had said, 'Every Liberal throughout the United Kingdom is asking: "What is Birmingham going to do with the minority clause?"' <sup>11</sup> Birmingham's answer was the Federation of liberal associations—the Caucus.

The Caucus substituted for the small, independent local committees that had hitherto chosen candidates and managed party affairs, much larger associations, popularly elected, but federated under a central organization which selected candidates, approved or vetoed any local decisions, and supplied literature and speakers for political campaigns. This organization provided the opportunity for a kind of 'democratic centralism,' registering grass-roots opinion through a central agency. It, also, contained the hazard of dictatorship from the top, and in actual practice the central organization tended to call the signals.

In Birmingham itself Chamberlain's conception of municipal government as a 'joint-stock enterprise' rapidly took tangible and extended form. The Liberal Federation was the firm under which Chamberlain, Schnadhorst, and their friends carried on their operations, and since only Liberals were invited to join, Conservatives were excluded from public life in Birmingham. Excluded from public life they became indifferent to it. The Liberals by referring to Conservatives invariably as 'the enemy' did much to induce them to act the part.

Outside of Birmingham the National Liberal Federation had become by the early 'eighties so powerful that Hartington felt that Chamberlain had organized an outside power to the belittlement of Parliament. The Federation, for the first time, established a Parliament outside the Imperial

Legislature on a permanent footing, and a new organ—that of agitation—was added to the political constitution of the country.<sup>12</sup> Gladstone wrote to Lord Rosebery in 1880: 'What is outside Parliament seems to me to be fast mounting . . . to an importance much exceeding what is inside.'<sup>13</sup> Denunciations of Chamberlain as a 'demagogue' referred less to his bringing forward measures that would appeal to the masses than to his organizing of the masses. The National Liberal Club and the corresponding Constitutional Club of the Conservatives, which quickly acquired comparable power, were the first clubs in which political opinions rather than social fitness were a qualification for membership.

The Midlothian campaign of 1880, which brought Gladstone and the Liberals into power, epitomized confidence in the new methods of popular appeal in political action. Never had there been such mobility of outstanding speakers, such frequency of speeches, and such full reporting. Selbourne described the campaign as 'a precedent tending in its results to the degradation of British politics, by bringing in a system of perpetual canvass, and removing the political center of gravity from Parliament to the platform.'<sup>14</sup> Chamberlain somewhat excessively exulted, 'By this token know ye the power of the Caucus and bow before it.'<sup>15</sup>

Like the earlier Utilitarian-Evangelical doctrine of individual responsibility, the new methods of political appeal were a test of faith in the common people. How far are champions of 'democracy' and 'education' and the 'common man' actually willing to risk and to trust the results of democracy and education? Can 'the people' develop an understanding of their own best interests, a valid sense of their own direction? Or must they always be herded around and manipulated 'for their own good' to ends designated by their self-appointed leaders?

To such questions the Radicals who devised the Caucus returned the answer not of trusting the people but of telling them—with all the devices of propaganda at their command.

By 1886 the Liberal Federation represented only official Liberalism and in no way the aspirations of the masses.\*

Despite such fervid efforts on the part of leaders of each party to manipulate the people in seemingly opposite directions, it was still not clear that the basic structure of English political life had altered in any fundamental way with the addition of the new electorate. England in the 'seventies was still spending its venturesomeness on trade and industry; enterprise in politics seemed more a matter of adaptation in machinery than of innovation in principle. There was no great change since Robert Lowe had pointed out in 1867: 'We have no longer a party of attack and a party of resistance. We have instead two parties of competition, who, like Cleon and the sausage-seller of Aristophanes, are both bidding for the support of Demos.'<sup>16</sup> The habit of English politics was a choice between two sensible versions of the same thing.

The 350 Liberals and 238 Conservatives who assembled in the House of Commons in 1880 † represented exceptional acumen, brilliance, and popular confidence. The presence of such men as Sir Charles Dilke, G. B. Firth, Thorold Rogers, Jesse Collings, and Henry Broadhurst insured that some of the newer leaven in ideas would not be lacking. Everyone except perhaps Gladstone knew that something had to be done about Ireland, but no one looked upon the

\* Ostrogorski, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 303. Arthur Koestler has raised this whole problem in *Darkness at Noon* (New York, Macmillan, 1941).

† 'The maturity of the masses lies in the capacity to recognize their own interests . . . A people's capacity to govern itself democratically is thus proportionate to the degree of its understanding of the structure and functioning of the whole social body . . . Every jump of technical progress leaves the relative intellectual development of the masses a step behind . . . in a state of relative immaturity, and renders possible or even necessary the establishment of some form of absolute leadership.' (Pp. 168-9.)

† 'The general election of 1880 had issued in the most severe defeat which the Conservative party had known since the great Reform Bill or was to know again till the cataclysm of 1906. The Liberals came back with a majority of 107 of their own men over the Conservatives. With the 65 Irish Nationalists who had hitherto always been reckoned as their supporters, their parliamentary majority was 172.' (Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1931, Vol. III, p. 121.)

sixty-four Home Rulers in the House as any particular threat to two-party government. No one anticipated that by the middle of the decade eighty-six Irish Nationalists would hold the balance of power, and that the two major parties would have become involved in such confusion on foreign and domestic issues that they would go to pieces and be re-formed on the question of Ireland. It was not yet clear to how large an extent both Tories and Liberals expressed only variations on the same dominant themes of the period, so that it was less a question of what measures—on franchise, health, or housing—should be passed than of which party could contrive to get itself in office to pass them. Few foresaw the possibility that by the early 'nineties the 'radical' workers would have lost faith not only in Gladstone, but in Chamberlain as well, and would have formed an Independent Labour Party of their own.

Twenty years later, in 1900, on the eve of an election, Chamberlain found it necessary to urge ominously, 'Patriotism before politics.'<sup>17</sup> This suggests the loss of faith that twenty years was to bring in political action and in political parties as instruments of 'progress.' What was to happen in these twenty years was that the naive optimism regarding the integrity of democratic politics was to give way to greater skepticism; a 'two-party system,' with both parties representing property interests, was to begin to appear in the guise of a façade for something other than democracy; and the parties of property were to be challenged by 'the people.'

The Conservative Party of the 'eighties saw England in terms of the interests of the ruling class, within which the welfare of the landowning aristocracy and the welfare of private business were coming more and more to be identical.\* This frame of reference determined their attitudes and their tactics on the major issues of the day. One of the authors of

\* 'If there was a conflict of opinion between the landowning and industrial interests, there was no difference of policy with regard to the Constitution, the social fabric or the economic order.' (H. R. G. Greaves, *The British Constitution*. London, Allen and Unwin, 1938, p. 35)



*The Radical Programme* wrote in connection with the Housing Bill of 1875:

In truth, it could scarcely be expected that Tories would even consider an efficient measure of social reform . . . The simplicity of their creed—I shall do what I will with my own—rather unfits them to take part in the complex workings of an advanced civilization.<sup>18</sup>

If this was the voice of a critic, Lord Salisbury himself was no less emphatic on the Tory policy, which was a lack of policy, for social change:

We have no programme [for social reform] because we are very sceptical of the benefit of raising such political questions at all. As a party we do not advocate organic change. Admitting that organic change is sometimes inevitable, we regard it as an evil, and we do not desire to give it any assistance we can avoid . . . it occupies time and energies which are wanted for other purposes.<sup>19</sup>

Churchill in December 1942 spoke more tersely to the same effect: 'Sir, we must beware of needless innovation, especially when guided by logic.'<sup>20</sup>

Social change and 'reform' measures of various kinds, from further extension of the franchise to land reform, better housing at government expense, or an eight-hour law, were measures to be resisted as long as possible, and, when they could no longer be avoided, to be passed by Conservatives rather than Liberals and to have their unfortunate results mitigated as far as possible. Disraeli had adopted this policy in 1867 when popular demand made an extension of the franchise inevitable, and Lord Salisbury, in more difficult times, endeavored to continue it. The fixed points of his policy were keeping his party in power and preventing anything from being done, since any positive action, in the temper of the 'eighties and 'nineties, would disturb the institutional structure he was committed to maintain. His achievements, like those of Baldwin in the nineteen-twenties, were almost always negative—preventing things from being

done. So successful was this policy that it could be said of him:

It was the chief part of . . . Lord Salisbury's success that nothing particularly happened at home while he was in chief control . . . He did not solve the English social problem; he only avoided unnecessary troubling of the waters . . . Within a year of his retirement the Conservative Party was shattered; within a decade everything he had striven to avoid had come to pass . . . \*

After 1867, however, more concessions were necessary to 'maintain order,' that is, to avoid changes in basic institutions and distribution of property. Goschen's fear that the new electorate would be 'less faithful to political economy' and would demand 'more vigorous action, a fiercer warfare against abuses, more government interference' <sup>21</sup> was justified.

*Reynolds' Newspaper* asserted the opposition of workers to the Tory Party:

Lord Beaconsfield was no fool . . . [He] is not yet dead a year. [But he would wonder at Salisbury and Northcote] . . . the policy of the two leaders would seem to be this: that parliament exists for the conservation of property, land in especial, and that no opinion is to be represented in parliament by election, except religious opinion.<sup>22</sup>

The people must not allow their minds to be diverted from this question of the tenure of land by any tall talk about empire, the glory of England and the prosperity of trade . . .

Toryism is to-day what it always was—exclusiveness. It is a representation of privileges and vested interests.<sup>23</sup>

The majority of the newly enfranchised workers had much less political awareness than *Reynolds' Newspaper*, and many of them by their political action justified the prediction that:

\* E. T. Raymond (pseud.), *Portraits of the Nineties*, London, Unwin, 1921, p. 67. 'The text from which he most frequently spoke was the moral evil as well as the economic fallacy of the "new Radicalism," of which Mr. Chamberlain within the Cabinet and Sir Charles Dilke outside were then the most prominent . . . exponents.' (Cecil, *Salisbury*, Vol. III, pp. 64-5.)

. . . the working classes must, from the necessity of their position, have a leaning to Conservatism. In the event of social disorder or disturbance they are the first to feel any ill effects; capital quickly shuts its portals and employment soon diminishes.<sup>24</sup>

But among the workers there was enough awareness of the possibilities of their newly acquired power \* so that during the 'seventies appeasement and a theory of 'ransom' rather than of resistance to workers' demands marked Conservative policy. Concession on a specific issue might be a way of avoiding more revolutionary changes. Conservatives became involved in the difficult matter of 'harmonizing their principles with their prospects. Division in Parliament along the line of principle gave way to division along the line of partisan advantage, made decent by party shibboleths.' <sup>25</sup>

The social legislation of the 'seventies was, for the most part, Liberal proposals taken over and passed by the Conservatives frequently with Radical additions. Conservative policy, whether in legislation or in attitude toward social issues, was one of tactics rather than strategy, of manipulation for immediate ends, rather than understanding in terms of social direction—but always with the assumption that the desirable goal was the maintenance as far as possible in the face of the new threat of the people, of existing institutions, especially of existing property arrangements. Humanitarianism was only good—indeed was only economically possible—under the conditions of the established order. Appeasement in social legislation, attempting to confine itself to minor alterations, must be seen in this setting. Basic change would threaten not only Tory wealth and prestige, but also Tory philanthropy—there could be no questioning of social and economic fundamentals.

Thus the depression was to the Tories not so much a development that should be understood in its relation to contemporary institutions, or a recurrent phenomenon in a long process, but an immediate inconvenience to be circum-

\* Cf. Ch. vii, pp. 252-3.

vented as rapidly as possible. In this circumventing, expediency mattered more than principle. 'Economic liberalism' and 'protection' could be picked up and dropped for immediate ends with no long-term commitments. Immediate Tory suggestions for dealing with the depression were the abandonment of free trade in favor of tariff retaliation and colonial preference. For a time such trade considerations were important enough to risk the alienation of working-class support in furthering them. The *Annual Register* noted as early as 1881 that there was some fear that the protective principles of the Conservatives would reappear in the depression.<sup>26</sup> But as the election of 1885 drew near and conciliation of the working class became more important, the Conservative tactics were to drop violent demands for 'Fair Trade' and 'Reciprocity,' and to concentrate instead on the malevolence of the Gladstonian Opposition in refusing to take part in the Trade Depression Inquiry.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile Lord Salisbury was continually re-affirming in Parliament that 'the only wise legislation is the legislation that assumes that every man will act according to his own interests,'<sup>28</sup> and yearning publicly for the time 'when the doctrines of political economy were in force . . .'<sup>29</sup> In 1867 the general meeting of the Conservative Associations by a large majority declared in favor of protection as a remedy against the depression of trade in agriculture and unemployment. The alliance with the Liberal Unionists, however, made an official acceptance of protection by the Conservatives impossible at this time. 'Hence for the time being Free Trade was safe, and Lord Salisbury, endowed with a wisdom lacking to caucuses in general, . . . left the resolutions of the latter severely alone.'<sup>30</sup>

When the Third Reform Bill was imminent it was clear that in questions of franchise as of economics, ransom rather than resistance was expedient political tactics. Lord Salisbury's object as leader of the Tory opposition was to eject the Liberal Government from office. He took a leaf from Disraeli's book and endeavored to oust the Liberals and Radicals as Disraeli and Derby boasted they had ousted the

Whigs nearly two decades earlier. He wished for a dissolution, and in order to get it was willing to promise anything as far as Reform was concerned. Sir Charles Dilke wrote in 1884:

The Tory game is to delay the franchise until they have upset us upon Egypt, before the Franchise Bill has reached the Lords . . . Our side will be in a humour to treat as traitors any who do not insist that the one Bill and nothing else shall be had in view—in face of the tremendous struggle impending in the Lords.<sup>31</sup>

Lord Salisbury was willing to pass not only the same franchise bill he would not allow Gladstone to pass, but a redistribution bill more radical than Gladstone's. Said Lord Kimberley:

It will become a sort of open competition which party can go furthest; I should not be surprised if . . . [Salisbury] were to trump us by proposing to abolish the House of Lords.<sup>32</sup>

As the Bill was making its way through the Second and Third Readings, and a Tory amendment was defeated, Lord Salisbury wrote:

A great many indications combined to prove that the ice was cracking all around us, and that we should have led the party to great disaster if we had declined to negotiate.<sup>33</sup>

The implications of the Bill beyond party politics were clear. Lord Randolph Churchill said:

You have changed the old foundation [of the British constitution] . . . Your new foundation is a great seething and swaying mass of some five million electors, who have it in their power . . . by the mere heave of the shoulders, . . . to alter profoundly, and perhaps . . . ruin the interests of the three hundred million beings who are committed to their charge.<sup>34</sup>

In issues of social reform, as well as franchise, the Conservatives at first resisted, then frequently took over Liberal proposals and went beyond them. Employers' Liability was opposed by the Conservatives in the name of property, safe

investment, and free contract.\* The bill was finally passed with Conservative acquiescence and opposition turned to defeating its operation.

In 1895 the Earl of Wemyss in an address delivered in the House of Lords to eight Peers declared that

. . . unless the so-called Conservative party mend their ways, renounce their so-called policy of 'Social Amelioration,' and cease to try to run against the Liberals on the Socialist race-course, where they will always be beaten, there is no hope of the resuscitation of their tactically destroyed party and the bettering of our nation's prospects as regards the security of liberty, property, and freedom of labour . . .<sup>85</sup>

One way of staving off undesired domestic legislation or, if need be, of emasculating its results was concentration on foreign affairs. Disraeli had endeavored to distract popular attention from domestic grievances by splendid demonstrations abroad. Lord Salisbury was less flamboyant and less assiduous in foreign policy than Disraeli, and he was riding an imperialist tide, which eventually carried even Chamberlain, Dilke, and the Webbs. In the absence of a clear-cut and distinguishing Conservative policy on foreign affairs, and with the tactics of competing with the Liberals on their own territory, the Party lost clear definition, and induced the frequent comment that the Tory Party as a party of separate principles had ceased to exist. The *Annual Register* at the end of the decade made a less sweeping appraisal of the same import:

Whatever increase of strength the Conservatives showed in 1890 was due to the misfortune of their opponents rather than to their own merits. They had displayed throughout the earlier Session an inability to catch the temper of the public mind, and by their misplaced obstinacy on the Licensing Bill, not less than by their weakness in the conduct of their other measures, they had undermined public confidence . . . the close of the year found them divided and disheartened, with no alternative policy on which to unite the various sections of the party.<sup>86</sup>

\* See Ch. v, pp. 157-60.

This was the outcome of an orientation of aims and tactics in terms of defeating or retarding the Radical movement. A negative policy had brought its own returns.

The Tory Democrats, the 'Fourth Party,'\* represented an extreme form of the attempt to preserve Tory institutions by conciliating the People. They were a Conservative minority consisting at first of four men: Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir John Gorst, Henry Drummond Wolff, and Alfred Balfour.

The attitude toward the four 'below the gangway' appears clearly in contemporary comments:

. . . Thus did Lord Randolph's strategy, excelling the bedstead in the village inn known to Goldsmith, contrive a treble debt to pay. It wasted the time of the House; it undermined the authority of the Premier, and it kept the Fourth Party well to the front.<sup>87</sup>

The difference between the Irishmen and the Fourth Party was, that the Irishmen had a distinct cause and purpose to fight for . . . while the Fourth Party were only fighting with the hope of finding out some cause for which it would be proper to make a battle.<sup>88</sup>

Taken as a rule, it cannot be alleged against the young men composing the Fourth Party that the fact of their absolute ignorance of a subject prevents them from delivering judgment upon it. But from whatever reason, the fact remains that on the question of the meat supply, with its abstruse reference to tests for pleuro-pneumonia, the Fourth Party was silent, and the astonished planet undirected blundered on through space.<sup>89</sup>

The Tory Democrats threw into high relief one aspect of British politics: it was a dignified personal career—a prestigious game among friends. The young men of the Fourth Party were getting renown by playing a game; it might have been cricket, but happened to be politics. Hence the bland stealing of the platform of their opponents, the juggling of issues in any fashion that might please the workers. It was a tactical contest, and the chief point involved was to keep at the bat.

\* The Irish Party was the Third Party.

The Fourth Party came into existence when the Gladstone Government ran into an unexpected obstacle at the very outset of the first session of the new Parliament in May 1880. Charles Bradlaugh, an avowed atheist, declined to take the oath and the House went into a prolonged controversy over whether he should be allowed to assume his seat. First Sir Henry Wolff, then Lord Randolph Churchill and their two colleagues welcomed this opportunity 'for harassing not only the leaders of the Government, but likewise the leaders of the Opposition, by seizing on the first chance of obstruction.'<sup>40</sup> Their action in the Bradlaugh incident set the tone of their future policies and action.

'Their hatred was for the middle class. Their illusion was that the Conservative Party was still the party of aristocracy . . . For the Tory Party was now itself very largely middle class and only very slightly democratic.'<sup>41</sup> They tried to combat socialism by having the Conservative Party itself more sensitive and more equipped than the Liberals to meet the needs and carry out the demands of the 'working classes.' They realized that if the Tory Party was to continue in power, it must become the kind of a popular party Disraeli had envisaged. A legislative measure, therefore, was an instrument for wooing the people. Lord Randolph Churchill's denunciation of Gladstone might with equal appositeness have been made of his own Party:

Votes at any cost, votes at any price. Refrain from nothing that can get you votes, . . . An English government has never yet been conducted on such principles—better suited to a White-chapel auction than to the conduct of our state.<sup>42</sup>

Lord Randolph stated that a Tory Democrat might go 'to any extent' toward liberalism or progress, provided that 'the maintenance of the monarchy, the House of Lords, the union between Great Britain and Ireland, the connection between Church and State' were maintained.<sup>43</sup> Gladstone wrote to Lord Acton, in 1885:

Tory democracy . . . is no more like the conservative party in which I was bred, than it is like liberalism. In fact less. It is



demagogism . . . applied in the worst way, to put down the pacific, law-respecting, economic elements which ennobled the old conservatism . . .<sup>44</sup>

So far did the influence of the Tory Democrats on the main body of the Conservative Party go that in 1885 Lord Salisbury was reported as having capitulated completely to Churchill and the younger group. When in 1885 the Liberal Government was defeated on the more remote issue of failure in Egypt and the immediate issue of the budget, Lord Randolph Churchill had the deciding influence in the selection of Lord Salisbury's Conservative Cabinet. In the following year, when Lord Salisbury again formed a government, after the brief interlude of Liberal Government and its defeat on Home Rule for Ireland, Lord Randolph Churchill was Chancellor of the Exchequer. The budget which he introduced 'was essentially democratic. As the *Saturday Review* observed "a free breakfast table was to be provided for the masses at the cost of taxes put on the luxuries of the rich" . . . and Lord Rosebery once remarked that, if Lord Randolph had remained in office—"that he was prepared to tax the very cartridges with which the Tories killed or missed their game."'<sup>45</sup>

Churchill was defeated on his democratic budget and resigned, and thereafter did not hold Cabinet office. But his efforts to 'democratize' the Conservative Party continued. At Dartford in 1886, in what Winston Churchill described as the most important speech of his life, Lord Randolph advocated free allotments of land for agricultural laborers, reduction of public expenditure and consequently taxation, and support of those Powers 'who seek the peace of Europe and the liberty of peoples in foreign policy.'<sup>46</sup>

In the same year he wrote to Lord Salisbury lamenting that he felt the Conservative Party was not prepared to adopt the program advocated at Dartford:

Alas! I see the Dartford programme crumbling into pieces every day. The Land Bill is rotten, I am afraid it is an idle schoolboy's dream to suppose that Tories can legislate . . . They can gov-

ern and make war and increase taxation and expenditure à merveille, but legislation is not their province in a democratic constitution . . . I certainly have not the courage and energy to go on struggling against cliques, as poor Dizzy did all his life! <sup>47</sup>

To this letter Salisbury replied:

I think the 'classes and the dependents of class' are the strongest ingredients in our composition, but we have so to conduct our legislation that we shall give some satisfaction to both classes and masses. This is specially difficult with the classes—because all legislation is rather unwelcome to them, as tending to disturb a state of things with which they are satisfied. It is evident, therefore, that we must work at less speed and at a lower temperature than our opponents. Our Bills must be tentative and cautious, not sweeping and dramatic! <sup>48</sup>

Churchill, however, continued to attack this apathy of Lord Salisbury's Government, declaring that neglect of problems of land and housing would surely produce 'an immeasurable amount of want, of misery and of woe' and might produce revolution. <sup>49</sup>

The Tory Democrats did not go far in stirring their own party from its accustomed moorings; they were perhaps more successful in a second aim of their policy—their influence on the Liberals. Gladstone wrote to Lord Hartington in November 1885:

I must conclude this [about modern radicalism] that if it is rampant and ambitious, the two most prominent causes of its forwardness have been: 1. Tory democracy. 2. The gradual disintegration of the liberal aristocracy. <sup>50</sup>

Churchill was bidding hard against Chamberlain for the favor of the masses. <sup>51</sup> The Employers' Liability Bill gave the newly organized Fourth Party its chance. Whether their main interest was political ambition or the common man, it had the effect of goading on the Liberals:

The Fourth Party . . . approached the question with open minds, as independent persons who desired only to do right be-

tween man and man and cared nothing for the sordid interests involved. Whereas Ministers had expected that Tory opposition would naturally take the form of a defence of the employers' position, the Fourth Party proceeded to criticise the measure entirely in the interests of the working class. This secured them two advantages, which it may be presumed they desired equally. First, it was in accordance with the spirit of Lord Beaconsfield's progressive Toryism and would really benefit the labouring people for whose sake the Bill was designed. Secondly, nothing could be more embarrassing to a Liberal Government than Conservative opposition on the grounds that the Bill did not go far enough. 'Be thorough,' exclaimed these Tories to the Government. 'Fulfill your election pledges. If you intend to deal with industrial questions, let it be in an honest and courageous spirit.' <sup>52</sup>

In regard to extension of the franchise, furthering their own political ends appeared to be the main aim of the Fourth Party. Churchill at first opposed the Reform Bill in a speech at Edinburgh in December 1883,<sup>53</sup> but by May he was deriding the Conservatives who still held out against it.<sup>54</sup> These tactics called forth ironical comment from both Radicals and Conservatives. *Reynolds' Newspaper* believed that Churchill's political motives made him only a useful tool for any group with a consistent purpose:

We wish the Trade Union Congress would now and then be a little more energetic in politics. We do not mean in party politics, for the working man the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee is of no consequence. But it is important to use Lord Randolph Churchill . . . to make him believe that he may gain working men by concessions to the order of labour . . . he will go to very great lengths indeed to compete with Mr. Chamberlain.<sup>55</sup>

The *Fortnightly Review* was equally scornful:

A Tory Democrat appears to be one who professes Radical opinions, yet gives to the House of Commons a tolerably steady Conservative vote . . . Even Lord Randolph Churchill . . . can scarcely believe that the most credulous Conservative will follow him when he makes common cause with Mr. Broadhurst in his

scheme for the enfranchisement of urban leaseholders . . . He cannot seriously hope to outbid the Radicals . . . if the English people are bent on having Radical measures, they will prefer to have them from the politicians who call themselves what they are.<sup>56</sup>

Chamberlain was both annoyed by and contemptuous of Lord Randolph as an opponent:

I can only say that Lord Randolph's programme is a programme which, I am perfectly certain, will be absolutely repudiated by Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour. I dare say you have often seen at a bazaar or elsewhere a patchwork quilt brought out for sale, which is made up of scraps from old dresses and from left-off garments which the maker has been able to borrow for the purpose. . . . I think that the fancy programme which Lord Randolph Churchill put before you the other day may well be described as a 'crazy quilt.' He borrowed from the cast-off policy of all the extreme men of all the different sections. He took his Socialism from Mr. Burns and Mr. Hyndman; he took his Local Option from Sir Wilfrid Lawson; he took his Egyptian policy from Mr. Illingworth; he took his metropolitan reform from Mr. Stuart, and he took his Irish policy from Mr. John Morley. Is this Toryism? <sup>57</sup>

Despite these criticisms, however, a third result of Tory Democracy was, undoubtedly, to facilitate the Chamberlain alliance with the Conservatives and the formation of the Unionist Party in 1885 after Chamberlain's break with Gladstone over Home Rule. In Chamberlain's eyes 'Lord Randolph Churchill was the only attractive personality in the Conservative Ministry and the only safeguard against Tory reaction.' <sup>58</sup> No such political alliance as Chamberlain had had earlier with Dilke was ever formed between Chamberlain and Churchill; but initially it was Churchill and the radical influence he introduced into the Conservative Party which helped to make Chamberlain's shift possible.

After Churchill's entrance into the Cabinet in 1885, *Reynolds' Newspaper* published an editorial on 'The Disappearance of Tory Democracy':

Lord Randolph, like his great predecessors, Bolingbroke and Beaconsfield, has retreated from democracy into the bosom of the Tory party . . . The democracy has disappeared like a 'cloud-capped tower' and Toryism remains just what it was—the implacable enemy of mankind.<sup>59</sup>

Lord Randolph did not remain in the bosom of Toryism, but Tory Democracy as a Fourth Party was gone. Its successor was the Primrose League, an organization founded in 1883 by the Fourth Party to attract those Conservatives who now looked askance at the established Party organization as a closed corporation of parsons and landlords.<sup>60</sup> It thus aimed to carry out Disraeli's policy of revitalizing the Conservative Party through mass support, carrying a sort of manorial paternalism into urban centers, and it took its name from Disraeli's allegedly favorite flower. Lord Randolph's purpose was to secure more democratic control by the rank and file of Conservatives within the party and more popular support from the country. The passage of the Electoral Corrupt Practices Act, restricting electoral expenses, at the same time that the Tories were forced to spend more money in order to stand any chance at all at an election impressed Churchill with the necessity of a new type of appeal. The Primrose League with its emphasis on the Disraeli legend, its use of the rituals, of tags and flowers, of Knights and Dames, was intended to provide this appeal.

With these trappings designed to catch the popular imagination, the League sought to perpetuate the 'principles of Tory democracy':

. . . the maintenance of an ancient monarchy, the consolidation of the Empire, the preservation of the Church, 'the vigilant guardianship of popular rights, the timely extension of these rights . . . and the vigorous and earnest promotion of every social reform which can in any degree raise the character and condition of the English people.'<sup>61</sup>

More specifically it aimed 'To instruct working men and women how to answer the arguments of the Radicals and

the Socialists and the Atheists in the workshops and in the public-houses, and at the street corners.'<sup>62</sup>

Although by 1895 the League numbered a million and a quarter supporters, it became progressively more Tory than Democratic, and it failed to enlist the support of the people for the Conservative Party. This was not simply because its fee of a guinea a year was hardly calculated to appeal to the workmen of England, a third of whom earned less than 25s. a week, but because the large principles of 'consolidation of Empire' and 'maintenance of . . . monarchy' were far more carried out in practice than the specific and concrete 'promotion of . . . social reform.' And imperialism was no longer a distinctive Tory doctrine. Ritual and vague glories of empire could go only so far in appeal to a working population newly conscious of its 'rights.' By 1906 the Liberals were able to point out that the great Tory appeal to labor had not included land reform, support of the Eight Hour Bill, or extension of the Workmen's Compensation Act. The Primrose League actually influenced the Conservative Party not to go too far in social legislation.<sup>63</sup>

If the Conservatives were traditionally guardians of the established order, the Liberals were traditionally champions of individual freedom—the parliamentary 'liberty of the subject' and the economic freedom of the old Whigs as well as the newer interpretations of freedom of middle-class industrialists.<sup>64</sup> What was the role of Liberals at a time when concepts of the meaning of freedom were changing as rapidly as ideas of a desirable social order?

Such comments as the following, changing to acute denunciations over the Irish question in the middle of the 'eighties, accompanied the Liberal Party through the period:

Admit everything that is said against the Liberal management of foreign affairs . . . and it is still, in our judgment, preferable to the Conservative management of them. If both are incapable, modest incapacity is better than ambitious incapacity.<sup>65</sup>

Immediately the Liberal Government took office after the General Election of 1880, every reform in India which the Conservatives had introduced was set aside, and all the old jobs and abuses were revived by Mr. Gladstone and Lord Harrington . . . from that time to this the miserable system of draining India of her wealth . . . has been relentlessly kept up by both the English political factions . . . my experience is . . . that, when in office, . . . the Liberals are worse than the Tories.<sup>66</sup>

Nor, to say the truth, would the nation suffer an irreparable loss if the fountains of party eloquence were to be sealed up for some time to come . . . The opinions, if they can be called so, of Mr. Gladstone and his subalterns are in constant flux.<sup>67</sup>

If we ask how the England of the 'eighties looked to the Liberals we see at once that no single answer is possible.

Beatrice Webb viewing the 'eighties retrospectively said:

Mr. Gladstone's administration of 1880-1885 . . . this ministry of all the talents, wandered in and out of the trenches of the old individualists and the scouting parties of the new Socialists with an 'absence of mind' concerning social and economic questions that became, in the following decades, the characteristic feature of Liberal statesmanship. Hence it was neither in Parliament nor in the Cabinet that the battle of the empirical Socialists with the philosophical Radicals was fought and won.<sup>68</sup>

The party which Gladstone, somewhat to his own surprise, was again leading in 1880, was chiefly united on the negative issue of destroying the foreign policy of Disraeli. Gladstone wrote during the Midlothian campaign:

All our heads are still in a whirl from the great events of the last fortnight, which have given joy, I am convinced, to the large majority of the civilized world. The downfall of Beaconsfieldism is like the vanishing of some vast magnificent castle in an Italian romance.<sup>69</sup>

His principles, laid down in the Midlothian campaign, were oriented in terms of foreign rather than domestic policy:

The first thing is to foster the strength of the Empire by just legislation and economy at home, thereby producing two of the great elements of national power—namely, wealth, which is a physical element, and union and contentment, which are moral elements . . . My second principle . . . is . . . that its aim ought to be to preserve to the nations of the world . . . the blessings of peace. My third principle . . . —to strive to cultivate and maintain, ay, to the very uttermost, what is called the Concert of Europe; to keep the Powers of Europe in union together . . . My fourth principle is that you should avoid needless and entangling engagements—My fifth principle is to acknowledge the equal rights of all nations . . .<sup>70</sup>

Hopes of Radicals had been placed in the new government with very little specific warrant. They were appalled to discover after the Liberal victory that Gladstone had no thought of having radical representation in his Cabinet or even indeed of bringing any new thought to domestic problems. Gladstone told his old friend, Sir Francis Doyle:

The new parliament . . . will not draw its inspiration from me . . . I expect it to act in the main on well-tried and established lines, and do much for the people and little to disquiet my growing years . . .<sup>71</sup>

Chamberlain and later Dilke were, finally, included in the Cabinet but, with property amply represented by such men as the Duke of Argyll and Lord Hartington, the Cabinet was of as decidedly Whig complexion as if Gladstone had been a Grey or a Russell.<sup>72</sup> Shortly after the new government was established 'Harcourt was . . . struggling to hold the Gladstonian umbrella over the warring Whigs and Radicals.' <sup>73</sup> Lord Salisbury commented:

. . . an effort has been made to give the Radicals and the Whigs alike a share in the policy of what is called the Liberal party. The result is a movement of perpetual zigzag. It is rather like one of those Dutch clocks which we used to see in our infancy . . . When it is going to be fine Lord Hartington appears, and when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain is seen then you may look out for the squalls.<sup>74</sup>



Liberals, Radicals, and the Liberal-Labour Alliance \* looked with high hopes to Gladstone and the Liberal Party. The first half of the 'eighties saw the frustration of these hopes. The years 1880 to 1885 might be entitled Disillusionment with Liberalism. This disillusionment with the party which had been associated with liberty and with labor and which had been regarded as a kind of holding company for any good cause, this growing conviction that it was not through Liberalism that a new order could come, was a crucial factor in the formulation of a new social philosophy.

The government almost immediately became bogged down over Ireland † and the Bradlaugh oath issue. It was never during the next five years free from the necessity of dealing with what Gladstone would have liked to regard as extraneous domestic issues, and it shortly became involved in the Egyptian tangle, where it found itself dealing with problems of empire after the manner of the despised Beaconsfield. As Gladstone struggled with these questions, especially with Ireland, he was hampered by the fact that his power in the Cabinet he had chosen was less than in the House of Commons, and his power in the House of Commons less than in the country.

Despite these difficulties, important legislation including the Land Act of 1881, 'the most important measure introduced into the House of Commons since the first Reform Bill,' <sup>75</sup> was passed by the Gladstone Government. But this was the result of pressure upon the Liberal Party, not of its own foresight. Gladstone himself said before Parliament in 1890:

Suppose I am told that without the agitation Ireland would never have had the Land Act of 1881, are you prepared to deny that? . . . As the man responsible more than any other for the Act of 1881 . . . I must record my firm opinion that it would not have become the law of the land, if it had not been for the agitation with which Irish society was convulsed.<sup>76</sup>

\* Cf. Ch. VII, pp 268-74.

† Cf. Ch IV, pp 132-41.

Once the principle was recognized that there were considerations more important than freedom of contract, even persons who had opposed the Act wanted it to work successfully. Further land reforms were widely demanded so that the question became not whether certain laws were advocated by Liberals or Conservatives but which Government happened to be in power when they were brought forward. In April 1882, a Land Purchase Bill was under discussion by both parties, and for a few weeks it looked as if they might work together on the Irish question.<sup>77</sup> This brief period of lighter skies over Ireland was abruptly brought to an end by the Phoenix Park and Maamtrasna murders in 1883 and 1884, and the old struggle between more freedom and more coercion again dominated all consideration of Ireland.

Down to 1885, Gladstone hoped that it might be possible to satisfy Ireland without Home Rule; on the other hand, he held that the demand for Home Rule could not be resisted if it were seriously made by a great majority of the Irish people.<sup>78</sup> Having once recognized pressure and threat of social revolution from the Irish Nationalists as a guiding policy for the Liberal Party, he found no stopping place short of complete Home Rule for Ireland. The commitment of the Liberal Party to Home Rule and the resulting turmoil and party realignments of the mid 'eighties followed.

If in regard to Ireland Gladstone and the majority of the party were swept along somewhat reluctantly in the wake of the demands of a vigorous, organized minority, this was at least as true in regard to the other measures of reform passed in the first half of the 'eighties.

The Employers' Liability Bill of 1880 was not so much a deliberate affirmative act of the Liberal Party as a final response to long mounting agitation.<sup>79</sup> Mr. Broadhurst in speaking for the Bill said that:

. . . the question under discussion was one closely affecting the class whom he represented, . . . he . . . regarded the Bill before the House as a weak contribution towards the settlement

of this difficult question. There could be no reasonable settlement of this question which did not absolutely abolish the law of common employment.<sup>80</sup>

The Trade Union Congress, which Broadhurst represented, had for years been introducing annual resolutions in favor of a strong Employers' Liability Act, and George Howell believed that it was to them rather than to Chamberlain that the final passage of the Act was due.<sup>81</sup>

The official Liberal Party was somewhat apathetic in regard to land problems, in spite of dire agricultural depression and insistent demands for reform. But the combined pressure of the Report of the Royal Commission on Depression in Agriculture in 1882, the 'Fair Trade' cry raised by the Farmers' Union, and the plea for extension of the Irish Land Act to England could not be ignored. It resulted in the Allotments Extension Act, known as the 'Poor Man's Land Act,' in 1882 and in the Agricultural Holdings Act for England and Scotland in 1883. Now in England, as well as in Ireland, a farmer could not be deprived of compensation for 'unexhausted improvements'; landlords could not force him to contract out of the right.

In passing the Franchise Bill of 1884 Liberal leaders responded first to the demands of the radical section of their own party, expressed through the Caucus,<sup>82</sup> a little later, to those of the Tory Democrats, and to the demands of the country at large. By the early 'eighties both parties had come to accept the idea of the inevitability of extension of the franchise; the question was precisely how and when it was to be carried out. The passing of the Corrupt Practices Act, preventing bribery at elections, in 1883, and the declaration of the National Liberal Federation early in 1884 paved the way for further and decisive action. Chamberlain believed that county franchise would double the power of Liberalism in the State and make Liberalism synonymous with Radicalism.<sup>83</sup>

When Gladstone's Franchise Bill was read a second time it had a majority in the Commons of 340 to 210, and even

those most opposed to the measure admitted that a majority of this size could not be ignored. Following the vote in the Lords for delaying the Bill, there was a tremendous mass demonstration in favor of the Bill and against the House of Lords. The banners read: 'The people's will—the Franchise Bill and the reform of the House of Lords,' and 'Shall the peers rob the people of their vote?'<sup>84</sup> Lord Salisbury's initial response to these mass demonstrations was that 'We, at all events, will not consent to be guided by public opinion of the streets,'<sup>85</sup> but by November he himself yielded 'to the ice cracking all around us,' and the Bill was allowed passage through the Lords. The people who must be taken into account politically had been increased by two-thirds, and now numbered nearly four-and-a-half million.

Even with these measures desired by the people passed by the Gladstone Government, those who had hoped much from that government were not satisfied to see it reluctantly driven into one popular measure after another by its own Radical Wing and by outside pressure. They wanted more positive and more coherent action.

The course of the Gladstone Government may be traced through the mounting disillusionment of its strong, left-wing supporters such as *Reynolds' Newspaper*.

There is but one name in England [known] . . . in every corner and cranny of the country . . . as belonging to one who has the real interests of the nation at heart. There are two men in Europe who can touch the hearts of two nations . . . Gladstone and Gambetta. (22 February 1880.)

[There is] a good deal too much aristocracy in and about the ministry . . . We can easily understand why Sir Charles Dilke was not . . . in the Cabinet . . . [but] Mr. Fawcett . . . and Mr. Stansfield . . . [are] passed over . . . our hopes are based upon Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Chamberlain. (9 May 1880.)

The liberties of the people of England will be considerably abridged if the Government acts the part of a prosecutor in Ireland . . . If Mr. Parnell and his associates are indicted we

shall expect to see Mr. Bright, Mr. Forster, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Dilke leave a government which will then have fallen completely under the influence of the Whig section of the Cabinet. (31 October 1880.)

. . . Even with the national dockyards I find . . . some cruel neglect of the workman . . . and this under a so-called Liberal Government . . . last week there was issued an order that, as all the money voted had been used up, the services of 200 skilled artisans in one branch, and of 60 in another, would be at once dispensed with. (26 March 1882.)

. . . When Mr. Gladstone came into office he quietly connived, with one exception, I think, at all the scandalous abuses of the patronage exercised by our first and last Semitic Premier. (3 January 1885.)

In 1885 the Gladstone Government, which had come into power to end foreign embroilments, was under attack from one part of the nation for its defeats in Egypt and its support of Home Rule for Ireland, and from another, for its allowing Egypt and Ireland to distract attention from the stark facts of unemployment and hunger. *Reynolds' Newspaper* said:

The wrong man has unfortunately been killed in the Soudan, and legislation for the British people is to be postponed in favour of a debate in which the Government of Mr. Gladstone are to be censured for doing too much, or too little, or both . . . we have always been opposed to the policy of the Ministry in Egypt and in the Soudan . . .

Our unemployed people are asked to starve, and to look contented at the spectacle of millions being wasted . . . for no practical purpose except the safe reestablishment of an effete, demoralized, and demoralizing government in Egypt . . .<sup>86</sup>

The time has arrived for the Liberals to become the Radicals. The old Liberal creed savoured too much of Whiggery. The new creed is based upon progress and principles rather than on a bit by bit concession to the people. Primarily the people, as taxpayers, have the right to say that taxes shall be paid in proportion to the possessions of every man, which are secured in their value by the State.<sup>87</sup>

A like disillusionment with the possibilities of Liberalism drove William Morris to Socialism.

[In 1877] He was not yet a Socialist, for two reasons: first, he still vainly imagined that the worn-out Liberal Party was in earnest when it prattled of Reform; secondly, he had not yet consciously grasped the economic facts which lay at the basis of the Socialist creed. So for a little while we find him calling himself a Liberal Democrat or some such name. But he was soon to be disillusioned . . .

He is soon writing to Faulkner: 'I am full of shame and anger at the cowardice of the so-called Liberal Party.'<sup>88</sup>

. . . What remaining glimmer of orthodox Liberalism there ever was in Morris, was finally extinguished when the Liberals brought in their Irish Coercion Bill of 1881.<sup>89</sup>

It was this disaffection of their own earlier supporters, as well as the fear of Irish Home Rule, which led to the fall of the Gladstone Government in the mid 'eighties. The rapid shifts of government in 1885 and 1886 and the subsequent realignment of parties were only occasioned by the Home Rule issue. Their real significance lay in the breaking up of old social norms. The passing of the Franchise Bill had helped to bring these changes into the open. 'Above all, the change meant the fall of the historic Whigs. That patrician caste could not be again a controlling or nullifying factor in the Liberal Party.'<sup>90</sup> The heads of the great Whig houses, as well as Chamberlain, went almost solidly over to the Unionist side. Churchill described the general election of 1886 as unsurpassed in importance of the issues, the confusion of the parties, and the sincerity of the combatants by any election since the First Reform Bill. Of the 316 Conservatives, 191 Liberals, 78 Liberal Unionists, 85 Parnellites, the majority was a majority against Home Rule. The House of Lords, with the accession of the Whig chiefs, became overwhelmingly Unionist. They threw out bill after bill. As far as the immediate situation was concerned, they, or the caucus, had calculated well; divided and discredited, the Liberals were driven to the country and defeated, the Con-

servatives commanding an overwhelming advantage over them and the Irish combined.<sup>91</sup>

If the Liberal program of the Midlothian campaign had been essentially negative, the proposals of Liberal leaders in their effort to reconstruct their party after the split in 1886 were even more negative and nebulous. Gladstone was still struggling to combine in one party his own individualism and the Whiggism of the remaining Whig leaders, Hartington and Goschen, with the emerging 'radicalism of Morley,' as he had earlier tried to incorporate the radicalism of Chamberlain and Dilke.

Merely from nervousness, not from good will,  
They marched along shoulder to shoulder.

Gladstone had written to Lord Acton in 1885:

The 'pet idea' [of the liberalism of today] is what they call construction,— . . . taking into the hands of the state the business of the individual man. Both this liberalism and Tory democracy have done much to estrange me, and have had for many, many years.<sup>92</sup>

And in the same year he wrote to the Duke of Argyll:

I deeply deplore the oblivion into which political economy has fallen; the prevailing disposition to make a luxury of panics, which multitudes seem to enjoy as they would make a sensational novel by highly seasoned cookery, and the leaning of both parties to socialism, which I radically disapprove.<sup>93</sup>

By the end of the 'eighties it was clear that the work of the Liberal Party as an agent for destroying old evils was over. If the party was to mean anything in the future it had to throw off its indifference to the relations between classes and to the economic issues of the time. This its more reactionary leaders were not ready to do. They feared to go far on this path because of 'entanglement in fact or in public opinion with even a moderate socialist program.'<sup>94</sup> Between these leaders and the newer elements in their own party 'raged all the bitterness of Civil War.'<sup>95</sup>

The newer elements, even with the defection of Chamber-

lain, gained enough control so that by the middle and end of the 'eighties old-time Liberals were lamenting that the Liberal Party was abandoning 'liberal' principles, and that only under Conservatives could they be preserved:

. . . Are the principles to which we attach supreme importance likely to be promoted or otherwise by the return to power of a Liberal administration under Mr. Gladstone's auspices? . . . these fundamental principles . . . are three in number . . . : the freedom of the individual, the integrity of the United Kingdom, the maintenance of the Empire.

. . . Laissez-faire . . . is . . . in accordance with the immutable laws which regulate human existence . . . The end and aim of Liberal legislation should be to give every man—rich or poor . . . an opportunity of making his own way in the world . . .

. . . The whole theory of modern Liberals is that the State is to take in hand the control of the masses . . . Common sense tells me . . . that there is less practical risk of individual liberty being seriously endangered under a Conservative than under a Liberal administration . . .<sup>96</sup>

A program drawn up by the Liberal Party at Newcastle in 1891 was less a statement of principles than an attempt to provide 'a bit of fat' for each of the separate warring groups which composed it. Liberals were in favor of 'applying the principles of Burke, much diluted, to Catholic Ireland, and those of George III and Lord North to the recalcitrant Protestants of the North East.'<sup>97</sup> In regard to free trade they were uncompromisingly conservative. Between the new imperialism and the old Liberal Little Englandism there was bitter war.

Both critics and supporters of the change recognized that the Liberal Party of 1880 had disappeared by 1890.

Sidney Webb was writing optimistically from the Socialist point of view:

. . . The Liberal Party has now definitely discarded the Individualist Laissez-Faire, upon which, as a middle-class organization, it was so largely founded, and, with every approach towards democracy, becomes more markedly socialist in character. The



London Liberal and Radical Union, the official party organization in the metropolis . . . has lately in 1889 expressly promoted a measure to enable the London County Council to build unlimited artisans' dwellings, to be let at moderate rents, and to be paid for by a special tax, unrestricted in amount, to be levied on London landlords only. No more extreme 'socialistic' proposal could possibly be made, short of complete communism itself.<sup>98</sup>

The Liberal Party, by virtue of the very fact that it was a symbol and a magnet for worthy causes of whatever description, rather than the embodiment of a specific program, served a double function during this period. On the one hand, it offered: a symbol and source of expectancy which could be turned into actual concern for human welfare; a group sufficiently committed to 'freedom' and 'reform' so that there was at least a presumption in favor of response to pressure from its own Radical wing, the Irish group, or labor; a flexible group which could be used as a vehicle for reform by an organization with a definite program such as the Fabian Society. On the other hand, because of its vagueness, it was possible to hope anything from it and get nothing. Its association with good causes in general could be a boomerang deceiving its followers and eventually destroying itself. It was a false guide for the working class, thus prolonging an illusion and diverting attention from actual problems. In this way it was an obstacle to the growth of working class consciousness and the formation of a Labour Party in England.

When Gladstone in forming his 1880 government at last included, against his own wishes, the two men who had agreed that neither should take office of any kind unless one had a seat in the Cabinet,\* it was suggested that B.C. had come to mean Before Chamberlain and A.D. After Dilke.<sup>99</sup> It is to no small extent due to these two men—with a third, Parnell—rather than to Gladstone, that 1880 is a notable date in the

\* See pp. 218-19 above. Also Garvin, *Chamberlain*, Vol. 1, pp 286-302; Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, Vol. II, p. 630, Justin McCarthy, *A History of Our Own Times*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1901, pp 10-11.

history of British politics. In the field of political action they not only reflected but focused and carried forward the social trends of the time. It was Chamberlain who had responded to the increase in the voting population with the powerful if dubious instrument of the political caucus. It was Chamberlain who had seen the possibilities in the extension of municipal control as a model for national policy. It was Chamberlain and Dilke who represented in the Liberal Government popular demands for land reform, housing reform, extension of education, and the franchise. They recognized the new instruments of popular power. Had not Chamberlain and Dilke had an unusual influence with the Press, and had behind them the power of the Radical caucus, they could not have held their own for five years against a Cabinet of peers.

In 1883 Chamberlain wrote:

The Radicals in the Cabinet were now only Dilke and myself, and we found ourselves ignored or outvoted by the majority of our colleagues. In the country, however, our opinions were endorsed by at least four-fifths of the Liberal Party. It was clear . . . that, as soon as the franchise was extended the policy of the Government would have to be modified in the Radical sense.\*

By the mid 'eighties 'radicalism' had changed from a negative hatred of imperialism and of restraints in regard to Church, land, or trade to an advocacy of positive reforms. More important even than Chamberlain's specific work on land reform and employers' liability, and Dilke's on housing and limitation of hours of work, was the fact that they kept constantly before the Liberal leaders the idea that positive concern for the welfare of the people was proper business for the Government and for the Liberal Party.

This point of view in Chamberlain's article, 'The Liberal Party and Its Leaders,' appearing in the *Fortnightly Review* in September 1873, had caused moderate Liberals to seethe

\* Garvin, *Chamberlain*, Vol. I, p. 390. Cf. Ch. VII for relation of the labor movement to Radicalism.

'with wrath against the profane disturber.'<sup>100</sup> Chamberlain's various speeches elaborating his *Radical Programme* had a definite impact on political policies. On 29 January 1885, he made a speech in Birmingham which alarmed the Queen, *The Economist*, and Mr. Gladstone. He said:

Is it the case that any man who is willing to work can obtain employment at a fair remuneration; that he can provide for himself and his family, and lay something by for a rainy day? . . . During the last twenty years there has been a most extraordinary advance in the prosperity of this country; wealth has increased, manufactures have developed, invention has prospered, and our exports and imports have doubled and trebled. It has been calculated that the annual income of the country has increased in this time by 600 millions per annum. Well, the working classes . . . have become more thrifty, more temperate, they are better educated, and they are, therefore, perhaps, more comfortable. But their advance has not been . . . in proportion to the general average. During the whole of this time there have been constantly in receipt of parish relief nearly one million of persons; and probably at the very least one million more have been on the verge of pauperism.<sup>101</sup>

In September of the following year he insisted, speaking in London, that:

. . . to begin with at least, three points of the Radical Programme must be adopted or tolerated by the Liberal party: (1) fairer taxation; (2) free schools, (3) the power of local authorities everywhere to acquire land at its fair value . . . Never again would he allow his advocacy of this minimum of Radicalism to be hampered by official restraints imposed to soothe the Whigs<sup>102</sup>

To these demands the 'Unauthorized Programme' added: (1) Full local government for the counties; (2) Financial reform by graduated taxation and tax on unearned increment; (3) Disestablishment of State Churches; (4) Manhood suffrage and payment of members; (5) Home Rule for all nationalities in the United Kingdom, leaving the Imperial Parliament unimpaired.\*

\* Cf. Ch. v, pp. 180-83; Garvin, *Chamberlain*, Vol. 1, pp. 75-6.

Chamberlain's conception of the State as an instrument of social welfare had always been more to him than party allegiance. It was the apathy of the Liberals toward proposals for a positive program for social security, as well as his opposition to Irish Home Rule, which led him to leave Gladstone for a Tory alliance. Garvin dates the possibility of Chamberlain's shift to the Tories from the Reform Bill of 1867:

From this episode dates Chamberlain's active antipathy to the Whigs and his hankering thought that more might be obtained from a weak Tory Government faced by a strong Liberal Opposition than from a Liberal Ministry under Whig restraint . . . He became an uncompromising partisan, but a partisan for the most definite purposes. Party for its own sake he never put foremost.<sup>108</sup>

To *Reynolds' Newspaper*, however, the party shift was a betrayal of the cause of the people:

It is fortunate for the Liberal-Radical party that Mr. Chamberlain has spoken, for next to Mr. Gladstone he is the most representative Liberal leader . . . [He] is the statesman of the future. His career . . . is a career which has been marked by identity between the people and himself. (13 September 1885.)

. . . Mr. Chamberlain today is the most appalling failure in public life . . . The man who, to serve his own vanity or ambition, belied his professions and his past, can never again be trusted by the people whom he first betrayed and then traduced and vilified.

There has never been at any time in the history of England so malignant and purposeless a political crime as that of Mr. Chamberlain . . . In 1874 . . . his programme was advanced as that of Republicans . . . Then came the unauthorized programme . . . his first act of public betrayal, for though the programme was true to the people it was false to his leader . . .

From the issue of the programme the fall of Mr. Chamberlain may be dated . . . [In regard to Home Rule] . . . he made the final plunge, and ceased to be a democratic factor. (13 January 1889.)

'With the Liberals finally out of office Chamberlain acted as a matador to the Tory Party. Waving the red cloak of Home Rule before the Bull he [led] it rumbling round the ring. In 1885 he had said that the aristocracy must pay ransom for their privileges; and from 1886-1892 he made them pay pretty heavily for the Union—County Councils, Congested District Boards, Free Education. Chamberlain, with hardly a friend in the world, and with few but his Birmingham tenants behind him, extracted by the most painful dentistry, all these reforms from the jaw of the Salisbury administration.'<sup>104</sup>

The continuing influence of *The Radical Programme* was not confined to small Radical minorities; even after Chamberlain had left the party the official Liberal platform could not remain untouched by it. A Fabian Tract of 1891 said:

No sooner had Parliament risen . . . [in 1889] than the Liberal leaders began in all directions to make speeches on 'Social Reform.' They were mostly bad speeches, shewing that the speakers did not understand working-class politics; but they showed how the wind was blowing. Many of the Metropolitan Liberal and Radical Associations . . . passed a strong series of resolutions improving on the Birmingham programme. In December, 1889, the annual Liberal Conference was held at Manchester; and this time, instead of refusing to consider Payment of Members [of Parliament], they . . . actually had the impudence to declare . . . [after opposing it ever since 1832] that it is 'a necessary part of the Liberal programme.' But when a Radical amendment in favor of an Eight Hours Bill was proposed, the old Liberal hostility to Radicalism broke out again; and they refused to allow the amendment even to be put to the Conference . . . Next year, if the Radicals continue to threaten the Liberals instead of blindly cheering for them, they will swallow the Eight Hours Bill as they have had to swallow Payment of Members.<sup>105</sup>

Chamberlain carried his ideas of 'democratic organization' from caucus methods of election to methods of conducting Parliamentary business.

Chamberlain's conception of the near future demanded [in 1883] that the House of Commons should be made . . . an

efficient mechanism for carrying out the will of the common people in the field of social reform. In Cabinet he, with Harcourt, was strongest for limitation of talk, for using even a bare majority to guillotine debate, and for other means of putting through the piled arrears of democratic legislation.

Conservatives suspected his hand in everything they thought wicked. A most 'dangerous man' as their word went. The man of the Caucus had become the man of the *clôture*.<sup>106</sup>

The closure was supplemented by the guillotine, first used in 1881, by which a certain number of days was allotted to each of the remaining stages of a Bill. This operated not only to hasten Parliamentary debate but to dispense with it, and augmented the tendency for government business to be carried on by the Cabinet and Civil Service rather than by Parliament.

This record of the political parties of the 'eighties has been concerned with Conservatives and Liberals and their radical wings, which acted as goads to the main body of each party. In terms of social dynamics it might have been more accurate to devote the bulk of this chapter to the Irish Party. We have seen the situation of Ireland as an intruding event which profoundly influenced the treatment of social problems in England.\* We have seen the inadequacy of Liberal policy in dealing with the insistent troubles of Ireland bring about increasing disillusionment with political Liberalism. But this still underplays the importance of the Irish Party as a separate political power.

In 1880 the Irish members of the House of Commons were divided into three distinct groups: the Irish Tory landlords 'compared with whom an ordinary old-fashioned English Tory would have seemed like a man of enlightenment and of progress';<sup>107</sup> the men whom Gladstone called 'nominal Home Rulers,' the Whigs of Irish politics; and the Irish Nationalists led by Parnell.

\* See Ch. IV, pp. 132-41.

Parnell, himself a Protestant and a landlord, organized a following of Irish Catholics and tenants into a party which was for a decade a determining force in English politics. Under Parnell's leadership the issues of land reform and Home Rule were united, and the Irish Land League became a formidable power working through the Irish members of the House of Commons. When the rejection of Gladstone's Compensation for Disturbance Bill by the House of Lords in 1880 was followed immediately by tremendous access of activity on the part of the Land League, Ireland called the attention of England to the power that an aggrieved people could exercise outside of official channels. The policy of obstruction in Ireland, which made Captain Boycott's name a part of the language, and the use of obstruction in Parliament (leading to Chamberlain's introduction of the 'closure' of debate) went far toward determining the course of the Gladstone Government. Use of such methods also exemplified Parnell's faith in English democracy. He believed that justice would come to Ireland if Ireland could be kept before the attention of the English people.

In the swift party changes of the mid 'eighties both Conservatives and Liberals were bidding for the support of the Irish Party. After six months of Conservative government in 1885, following the election which returned 334 Liberals, 250 Conservatives, and 86 Irish Nationalists, the Irish Party held the balance of power. It was the Irish Party which caused the secession of Chamberlain, Bright, and Goschen from the Liberals. It was the Irish Party which led to the formation of the Unionist Party, a new version of Conservatism, and to six years of Conservative government. More important than any of these, it was the Irish Party which held persistently before the country definite issues which would have to be faced if Britain was really to take seriously the meaning of democracy.

The role of the Irish Party as an opposition party threw into relief the extent to which the two older parties were

defending the same principles of inequality and privilege in English life, throwing to the People whatever concessions were unavoidable in order to maintain the existing social order.

William Morris, writing in 1886, made the same point that Laski was to make forty years later in *Democracy in Crisis*:

. . . the utmost that the real Tory party can do . . . is to delude the electors to return Tories to Parliament to pass measures more akin to Radicalism than the Whigs durst attempt, so that, though there are Tories, there is no Tory party in England.

On the other hand, there is a party [Unionist], which I can call for the present by no other name than Whig, which . . . does, in fact, govern England . . . like all parties it includes men of various shades of opinion, from the Tory-tinted Whiggery of Lord Salisbury to the Radical-tinted Whiggery of Mr. Chamberlain's present tail . . . the groups will sometimes oppose each other very furiously at elections, and perhaps the more simple-minded of them really think that it is a matter of importance to the nation which section of them may be in power; but they may always be reckoned upon to be in their places and vote against any measure which carries with it a real attack on our . . . present system, political and economical . . .

Now this is the real Parliamentary Party, at present divided into jarring sections under the influence of the survival of the party warfare of the last few generations, but which already shows signs of sinking its differences so as to offer a solid front of resistance to . . . economical as well as political freedom for the whole people . . .

The future of the constitutional Parliament, therefore, . . . is a perpetual Whig Rump, which will yield to pressure when mere political reforms are attempted . . . but will be quite immovable towards any real changes in social and economical matters . . .

This, therefore, is what Parliament looks to me; a solid central party, with mere nebulous opposition on the right hand and on the left . . . fair play amongst themselves for the money-privileged classes to make the most of their privileges.<sup>108</sup>



In writing of the nominally opposing parties, Escott and Morley, from the middle-class point of view, and *Reynolds' Newspaper*, from the workers, give the same appraisal of sham issues:

In his speech at the Mansion House . . . Lord Salisbury dismissed the reproach of inconsistency . . . with the cynical comment that the functions of the opposition must not be confounded with those of the government . . . Lord Salisbury's . . . doctrine . . . amounted to a declaration that the Ministers of the hour are under an obligation, not to do that which, when they were candidates for office they pledged themselves to perform, but to tread in the footsteps of the men whose course they denounced. In other words, their responsibility as statesmen ceases directly their responsibility as officials begins.<sup>109</sup>

Old party divisions no longer obtain; the true division is now between the party of Privilege and the party of the Nation.<sup>110</sup>

The great battle between labour and privilege has commenced, but we hope we are not to be deceived by the skirmishing and tactical manœuvres of parties. If the people are firm, both parties will bid high; and in politics, as at the mart, the doctrine of the highest bidder has a certain utility.<sup>111</sup>

The consolidation of parties to resist the people which Bagehot had foreseen had come to pass:

As a theoretical writer, I can venture to say, what no elected member of Parliament, Conservative or Liberal, can venture to say, that I am exceedingly afraid of the ignorant multitude of the new constituencies. I wish to have as great and as compact a power as possible to resist it. But a dissension between the Lords and Commons divides that resisting power; . . . The main interest of both . . . is now identical, which is to prevent or to mitigate the rule of uneducated members.<sup>112</sup>

The organization in the early 'nineties of a genuine opposition party, the Labour Party,\* was the answer to the tacit consolidation of the established parties. As many of the issues of the preceding decade had been decided not by the

\* See Ch. VII, pp. 292-6.

policies of Liberals or Conservatives but by persistent obstruction of a small, disciplined minority, the Irish under Parnell, so now another minority, the Labour Party, might come to hold the balance of power and determine the course of events.

## VII. *Organized Labor*

Everywhere the proletariat are the tag, rag, and bobtail of the official parties, and if any party has gained additional strength from the new voters it is the Tories. (Engels to Marx, 18 November 1868) <sup>1</sup>

The English working class had been gradually more and more deeply demoralized by the period of corruption since 1848 and had at last got to the point where they were nothing more than the tail of the great Liberal Party, i.e., henchmen of the capitalists. Their direction had gone completely over into the hands of the corrupt trade union leaders and professional agitators. (Marx to W. Liebknecht, 11 February 1878) <sup>2</sup>

You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general; the same as what the bourgeois think. There is no workers' party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal Radicals, and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies. (Engels to Kautsky, 12 September 1882) <sup>3</sup>

Thus Marx and Engels appraised British workers. Nor was similar testimony lacking from less single-minded observers. As late as 1885 Escott wrote:

England might be described as the empire of working men. They bear a larger numerical proportion to the rest of the population in England than in any European country; have more freedom; exercise more direct political influence . . . There is hardly a city in the realm which, if they were resolutely minded to do so, they could not turn into a state of siege . . . But we have faith in the good sense, the good feeling, and the political docil-

ity of the English working man . . . The British working man cannot divest himself of the conservative instincts of his race.<sup>4</sup>

These and a wealth of similar contemporary appraisals of the temper of the British workingman of the 'seventies and early 'eighties portray him as docile and devoid of class consciousness, a diluted version of middle-class England. But the decade of the 'eighties saw the third great upsurge of trade unionism in the nineteenth century,\* and a new orientation of British labor.

Organized workers affected the changes in social philosophy of the 'eighties in at least three ways: (1) They became skeptical of the middle-class philosophy which they had shared, with *ad hoc* deviations, and developed new statements of their aims. (2) They became skeptical of working through established middle-class institutions, such as the Liberal Party and the Co-operative Movement, and developed independent organizations of their own. (3) Labor became during the decade more unified and more powerful.

The inertias generated by habit and by misery made changes in 'labor in general' impossible. Among the aristocracy of labor at the top established values were strong, while at the bottom the harassments of keeping alive sapped energies that might otherwise have gone into militancy and innovation. But labor was definitely more of a power to be reckoned with at the end of the 'eighties than at the beginning. Engels, who had written so scornfully of British workers in 1882, wrote in 1890:

I consider this the grandest and most important part of the whole May Day Festival, that on May 4th, 1890, the *English proletariat*, newly awakened from its forty years' winter sleep, *again entered the movement of its class* . . . The grandchildren of the old Chartists are entering the line of battle.<sup>5</sup>

In a different mood *The Economist* bore witness to the same change. On 25 September 1880, *The Economist* had

\* The first was in the 'thirties, the second in the first half of the 'seventies

reported with quiet gratification the twelfth annual meeting of the Trade Union Congress at Dublin: \*

The Trades Union delegates who attended the annual Congress . . . last week are to be commended alike for their choice of subjects . . . and for the temperate and conciliatory tone in which their deliberations were conducted. No visionary schemes nor iconoclastic theories . . . no rabid outpouring against capital and property were heard . . . by such open discussion . . . the true interests of all parties are best furthered . . .<sup>6</sup>

In September 1890, however, *The Economist* found it necessary to attempt to explain away the totally different tone and impact of the annual Congress:

The total result of the Trades Union Congress, at Liverpool, . . . was by no means so formidable . . . as many writers have represented. [Although] the majority . . . advocated larger Parliamentary representation for labour, that is only the statement of an idea. The House of Commons will not be filled with working men. The resolutions will not alter the reluctance of most workmen to be represented by men like themselves, or the difficulty of finding incomes for labour candidates, or the tendency of such candidates when found and returned to learn by experience and debate, and become much like other people . . . Even the great work of the Congress, the carrying of the vote pledging it to demand an Eight Hours Law from Parliament, was not of much importance . . . we are informed that the older workmen expressed a strong distrust of all the new proposals.<sup>7</sup>

The *Annual Register* went further. In giving an unprecedentedly extended and detailed report of the Congress, it showed frank dismay, and deplored the influence of the 'New Unionism' in introducing 'revolutionary ideas among British workers.'<sup>8</sup>

Earlier in the year *The Economist* wrote with alarm of the growing power of labor apropos of public interference in the coal strike:

\* The National Trade Union Congress first met in 1868, and had met in every year since then except 1870.

In a labor dispute such as that in which [we] have been engaged employers are always placed at a serious disadvantage . . . while the employers have only their own resources to depend upon, the men have a practically inexhaustible reserve of other people's money upon which they can fall back.<sup>9</sup>

*The Times*, little given to mention of labor affairs during the 'eighties, shared this concern at the end of the decade:

Never has the alleged necessary conflict between capital and labour been more distinctly marked than it is now, or more disastrous in its results. Scarcely a day passes without news of fresh strikes . . . The question of the day is what cure is to be found . . . The working classes in this country are organized as they have never been before.<sup>10</sup>

The Royal Commission on Labour which was authorized by the Conservative Government and was in operation from 1891 to 1893, with a budget of nearly £50,000, the inauguration of a Labour Department of the Board of Trade, and the publication of a monthly *Labour Gazette* all suggest the increased importance of labor in the eyes of the government at the end of this period.

What were the attitudes of British workers at the beginning of the 'eighties, which Marx and Engels so deplored and *The Economist* found so reassuring? In the main workers shared middle-class faith in natural law and individual effort and middle-class fear of state power and of 'radicalism,' and they had developed no strong alternate philosophy of their own. The validity of middle-class beliefs had been demonstrated by Progress. And if for masses of workers wages of 25 shillings a week were not exactly Prosperity, and if over a third of the population of London earned less than 20 shillings,<sup>11</sup> at least the standard of living was rising, workers ate more meat and drank more tea; continued progress was the normal expectation, and nothing should be done which might impede its course.

'We are living in an age of progress, and I suppose there are very few things there is any finality to,' said the president

of the Cleveland Miners' Association in defending the 'sliding wage scale,' \* under which wages were made to depend upon the selling price of the product. The belief of masses of British workers in expanding economic prosperity and progress is eloquently attested by the fact that the sliding wage scale was so widely accepted. This arrangement could hold no possible advantage for workers except on the expectation of rising prices and increasing profits.<sup>12</sup> Despite some protests and friction, sliding wage scales were widely adopted, particularly in the heavy industries, in the prosperous years of the early 'seventies. With some exceptions they lasted through the depression on into the late 'eighties, and in some cases even into the 'nineties. It was 'in the nature of things' that wages had to follow prices. Wages were determined by supply and demand, which was in the long run good because of endlessly increasing prosperity.

In the view of the workers, no less than of the middle class, favorable operation of natural law depended upon voluntary individual effort. Workingmen should be hard-working, thrifty, and virtuous.† The doctrines preached a half-century earlier by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, through such publications as the *Workingman's Companion* and the *Workingman's Year Book*, still underlay much working class opinion. 'The working man . . . had a commodity to sell like anyone else—his labour—and his only way to prosperity was to raise its price. This he could do individually by improving his skill as a craftsman, saving his money, working hard and living temperately. By this means he would himself become an article of rare value

\* Testimony of Joseph Toyn before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 9 July 1891, *Minutes of Evidence, First Report*, Vol. XXXIV, 1892, p. 41. His only objection to the sliding scale was that it could not follow prices swiftly enough. It did not 'move quickly when prices are going up.' (Ibid. p. 47.)

† Barbara Wootton speaks of 'the favorite capitalist virtue of abstinence (as it used to be called when practised on the grand scale by those who had little cause to miss that which they abstained from consuming) or thrift (as it is called when practised on the small scale, according to which great individual sacrifice produces small results for the community).' (*Plan or No Plan*, London, Gollancz, 1934, p. 25.)

and his price would rise . . . Universal abundance would result, except, of course, for the idle, turbulent or debauched.' <sup>13</sup>

In the 'sixties the same sentiment appeared in *Songs for English Workmen to Sing*, which included the verse:

Work, boys, work and be contented  
So long as you've enough to buy a meal;  
The man, you may rely,  
Will be wealthy by and by  
If he'll only put his shoulder to the wheel.<sup>14</sup>

*Reynolds' Newspaper* was still preaching this doctrine in the 'eighties: 'It rests with the working orders to help themselves, and if they let . . . opportunity slip, they have none but themselves to blame.' <sup>15</sup>

Not only did the ideology of economic liberalism leave the individual's destiny strictly up to himself; it went further and bound him under the austere hand of moral duty in this lonely pursuit of a strictly private Utopia. Workers accepted the code of 'each tub on its own bottom,' with all the moral guilt entailed by such boundless assumption of individual responsibility in a frustrating industrial world. Guilt was 'internalized'; the institutions of society were not held responsible. Whatever else prospered or failed, a man should independently do his duty. 'The men . . . feel that their manliness . . . should be left alone,' declared Jabez Strong of the Cleveland Miners in opposing a legal eight-hour day.<sup>16</sup> Even Tom Mann, engineer, vigorous labor organizer, and member of the Social Democratic Federation, shared this view. When driven into a corner by Alfred Marshall and Mr. Livesey on the question of what motivation for a worker could be substituted for avoidance of destitution in a co-operative commonwealth, he replied, '*The advantage of doing his duty only.*' <sup>17</sup> In setting forth the aims of the new unionism Mann said, 'We will, above all things endeavour to be true to ourselves, and we call upon all who will respond to the call of duty as a religious work.' <sup>18</sup>



Poverty and unemployment were blamed by workers as well as by the middle class upon individual inadequacy. They did not blame 'Society,' or the existing order, or the people in power for their difficulties. As Thorold Rogers expressed it:

[The British workingman] has never affirmed the doctrine which underlies all Continental Socialism, that the State is bound to find him employment . . . he does not charge society at large with the frauds of traders and speculators, with the effects of rings and corners, with the sins of Governments and the follies of Administrations . . . As long as he is of this mind the sirens of contemporary and Continental Socialism will pipe to ears as deaf as those of Ulysses.<sup>19</sup>

Even if they thought of themselves as 'people in our station of life,' they still did not tend to think of their welfare apart from the welfare of society as a whole. Natural law operated. And it was business men—employers, bankers—who, working with natural law, brought prosperity and maintained England's position in the world. Things might be better, but without the good will of the people who ran the country they would certainly be worse. Deeply involved in the attitude of the workers was a deference to and dependence for protection upon the authority of the middle class. There were not conflicting class interests. Nothing would be gained by hostility; co-operation was the rule.

Morris and Bax summarizing the early 'eighties from the vantage point of ten years later wrote:

The working man of our generation . . . had no consciousness of his position as a proletarian, or that the reason for his existence as a workman, was that he might produce profit by his labour for his master. His ideal [again as a workman] was good wages and constant employment; that is, enough to enable him to live without much trouble in a constant condition of inferiority.<sup>20</sup>

Ten years ago . . . a Socialist lecturer . . . almost invariably found himself in opposition, not only to the members of the

middle classes who might be present, but also to the working men amongst his audience.<sup>21</sup>

Because of the animus of the Royal Commission on Labour in the early 'nineties, with its members selected by a Conservative Government, the testimony presented to it is a more accurate expression of opinions of labor dominant ten years earlier than of those then current.\* The emphasis on conciliation and arbitration in Commission discussions is indicative of the co-operative attitude of labor in the early 'eighties. In reading the testimony it is frequently impossible to tell from the content whether an employer or a worker is speaking. Workers viewed their interests as a special problem within the going system, not as facts challenging that system. They were not class conscious.

Neither the Friendly Societies nor the Co-operative Movement, the two principal economic organizations other than trade unions to which workers belonged, encouraged departure from these reigning middle-class values. One may argue that both these forms of organization, simply by reason of their being *organizations*, represented a departure from the social atomism which competitive individualism encouraged. But both of these movements not only included lower-middle-class members but worked thoroughly within the middle-class ethos. Their net impact on the worker was to make him a diminutive capitalist with his 'shares' and his accumulated equity. As Escott remarked of the Friendly Societies in 1885, 'These societies are . . . , with the exception of the Post-Office Savings Bank, almost the only opportunities of the investment of capital which the workingman has.'<sup>22</sup>

The Friendly Societies, dating from the eighteenth century, represented the need of men for security against sickness, death, and similar life-emergencies. As urbanization with its massing of anonymous men in great 'wens of civilization' increased in the nineteenth century, these Societies

\* See pp. 258-68 below.

grew in number and membership. By the mid 'eighties the 32,000 Societies of various types in Britain are reported to have aggregated nearly seven million members, who contributed on the average fifteen shillings a year each.<sup>23</sup> Not only were they a gigantic embodiment of the goodness of thrift and individual responsibility, but it was calculated in the 'eighties that they saved the ratepayers of the United Kingdom two million pounds a year. They were to the English working classes in town and country what life and accident assurance societies were to the middle class. A case before a charity committee was regarded as 'rather hopeless' when the applicant's family had not had membership in a Friendly Society. According to one writer Friendly Societies represented the peak of 'English self-help.'<sup>24</sup> Yet 'self-help,' however much of a virtue, is fraught with all the difficulties of little enterprise indifferently managed in the midst of expert large-scale industrial integration. Throughout their history financial insolvency was always a problem for the Friendly Societies because, as *The Economist* pointed out, of the 'insufficient contribution of the mass of members, aggravated by payment of larger benefits than those specified in the scale.'<sup>25</sup> There was considerable agitation for legislation that would be more than permissive and yet that would at the same time discover ways in which 'men of education can better assist their poorer neighbors without risk of pauperizing them . . . by undertaking the superintendence of such provident societies.'<sup>26</sup> Thus thrift, docility, and the charitable guidance of 'their betters' held the Friendly Societies within the conventional grooves of English life.

The Co-operative Movement had inspired great hopes of radical achievement among a few zealots. Even as late as 1891, one of these, George Holyoake, reaffirmed that:

The original aim and continuous policy of Co-operation is communism, which, as the reader has seen, means a self-supporting society distinguished by common labour, common property, and common means of intelligence and education; whereas Socialism conserves class distinctions, class privileges, and class war.<sup>27</sup>

What actually had happened was that co-operation, whatever irregular ambitions had attended its birth, had become respectable. Notably, although it had some investment of trade-union funds, it had carefully dissociated itself from the trade-union movement. Co-operative enterprises were fostered by members and their supporters not only as separate from but *in contrast to* other labor organizations. Where a choice presented itself, co-operation chose adaptation to capitalist controls rather than association with labor. Alfred Marshall, himself thoroughly middle class in point of view, wrote reassuringly of the co-operatives that, 'The Dividend has taught hundreds of thousands to know the pleasure of possessing two or three sovereigns free from any mortgage.' \* The co-operatives greatly increased both the self-respect and the economic strength of the working class. But the cost of their success was an entire separation from the other sections of labor.

The warning of Frederic Harrison, first sounded in 1865, was more clearly underlined as the decades went by:

I saw that the hope of those who looked for Co-operative Production to reorganize the conditions of Labour was an idle dream. Co-operation could do nothing to supersede or even to reform the current system of wage-earning.<sup>28</sup>

Too much has been made of the fact that a small fraction of the labouring classes (600,000 or 700,000 all told) have learned to buy their tea and sugar in economical ways at stores and clubs. There is no social millenium in this.<sup>29</sup>

In 1908 Frederic Harrison commented on his earlier statement:

'Co-operation' has taught more than two millions of working people to supply themselves with necessities in methods of strict economy and thrift. It has not enabled the mass of the prole-

\* Marshall, *Industry and Trade*, p. 291 n. At the end of the 'eighties each man, woman, and child in England averaged 15s. 8d. annually spent in Co-operative Stores, and in Lancashire, the West Riding, and Durham the average was as high as £5. The aggregate wage-earner's purchases were between £300 and £350,000,000 a year.

tariat to mend the conditions of Labour by more than a hair's breadth . . .<sup>30</sup>

The history of the Co-operative Movement offers no basis for questioning Webb's summary at the end of the 'eighties.

Less than one four hundredth part of the industry of the country is yet carried on by co-operation. The whole range of industrial development seems against it, and no ground for hope in co-operation as an answer to the social problem can be gained from economic history. It does not so much as attempt to deal with economic rent, or with such public services as railways, gas-works or schools. It affords a valuable moral training, a profitable but somewhat hazardous savings bank for small investments . . . But it is merely a survival from the days before the Limited Companies and Savings Banks existed, and ordinary joint stock investment is now rapidly elbowing it out of the field.<sup>31</sup>

The central directive and administrative personnel of the co-operatives became less and less like the Owenite original 'Rochdale pioneers' and more and more indistinguishable from the run of canny middle-class business men. The extent to which the whole co-operative enterprise was an expression of, rather than a challenge to, those values which workers shared with the middle class is attested by the report of the 1880 Co-operative Congress in the *Annual Register*:

The twelfth annual Co-operative Congress opened at Newcastle under the presidency of the Bishop of Durham, who, in his inaugural address, described co-operation as the development of free trade and liberty, the opponent of Communism and an aid to moral and material progress.<sup>32</sup>

But it might be expected that not Friendly Societies and Co-operatives as much as the trade-union movement would exemplify independent philosophy and action on the part of the workers. Here one immediately meets the fact that the stated purposes and activities of British trade unionism followed no single course. Throughout the nineteenth century much of the internal controversy of the unions concerned

what was 'genuine,' 'legitimate,' or 'appropriate' trade-union activity and what was 'using' the unions for the 'extraneous' interests of some political party or some faction within the union. What were regarded as genuine and central interests appropriate to trade unions at one period were 'subversive' at another; the policies and tactics of the radical 'new' unionism of one period were often a revival of the 'old' unionism of an earlier time.<sup>83</sup>

The trade unions of the late eighteenth century had been largely local organizations closely associated with Friendly Societies. Their appropriate activities were mutual aid to members through contributions to a common fund and the protection of craft and craft standards through regulation of apprentices and similar devices. Political activity on their part for the benefit of labor would not only have been regarded as extraneous; it was completely over their horizon.<sup>84</sup> Strikes were exceptional devices of last resort.

The early years of the nineteenth century saw the repeal of certain surviving medieval laws for the protection of crafts and of workers: the repeal of the Elizabethan law for the regulation of wages in 1813, and the law for regulation of apprentices a year later. As early as 1808 the cotton workers had sought and been defeated on a proposal for minimum-wage regulation. The lack of any public protection, combined with the quickening pace of the industrial revolution, led to a feeling among the more active unions that help was to be found in neither old nor new state regulations. Militant activity was the only recourse. Machine breaking and strikes became good union policy.

This machine-breaking period was an *ad hoc* defiance of capitalism on the part of the unions. Under the influence of Owen a period of more extensive defiance of capitalism followed; men set forth boldly to find a substitute for capitalism in the form of a co-operative commonwealth. Agitation and strikes were favored not to bring about specific reforms but as precursors of a new order of society. The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of 1832 was almost unlimited in its plans for remaking the world. It finally collapsed under

the combined difficulties of extensive employers' lock-outs and inadequate union funds.

'New social orders' come slowly, and the failure of certain of Owen's schemes further cooled the ardor of the enthusiasts. Accordingly the objective shifted, and while during the late 'thirties and the 'forties it was still good unionism to make use of strikes and of a generally aggressive policy, this effort was directed not to the building of a new society but to securing political gains. The Reform Bill of 1832 had fostered expectations and led to bitter disappointment. The only recourse of the workers seemed again a threat of force, of the success of which the middle class had given them so striking an illustration in 1832. They supported the six points of the People's Charter. British labor entered a period of the tactic of open threat to force through concrete political reforms.

The defeat of the Chartists in 1848 brought to an end this period of militant activity. There began the period of mid-Victorian trade unionism which dominated the working classes of the 'fifties and 'sixties and which, as a general policy, lasted well into the 'eighties. Machine destruction was over. Political defiance had abated. Capitalism was accepted. Political gradualism was accepted. Gladstone's dictum that 'that was the most desirable condition for the working classes that would enable its worthiest members to most easily rise out of it' <sup>85</sup> was the tacit assumption, if not the open profession, of many trade-union leaders during this period.

Orthodox unionism meant now to work in terms of middle-class ideas and share as much as possible of middle-class prosperity. 'To be calm, prudent, temperate and enlightened . . . was the . . . [mid-century] unionists' object.' <sup>86</sup> Class conflict was subversive; strikes were subversive except in very exceptional circumstances; advocacy of political action independent of the established parties was subversive. Effort to secure specific practical improvements in the condition of the skilled workers who composed the membership of the unions was now the legitimate activity of unions. The way to secure these reforms was to work through

the caste of trade-union officials. They were the chief executives in the various unions, and their leaders in the London Trades Councils formed 'The Junta,' which directed trade-union policies throughout the kingdom. Protests against this control by a union bureaucracy and against its policy of moderation appeared recurrently. But the position of official trade unionism was clear.

The third quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of fat takings for the English middle class. Just across the Channel on the Continent labor had not subsided as it had in England after the turbulent 'forties. The new middle-class partnership with labor in England, while outwardly serene, was colored by the sober awareness on the part of the senior partner that British labor might catch again the Continental fever. So the conciliatory attitude of the trade-union hierarchy was met by certain encouraging concessions. Middle class and aristocrats, Liberals and Tories, found it good business and good politics to be generous. In 1863, *The National Review* summarized the situation:

For some years the masses have been singularly unwilling to move . . . They have given up the Charter, given up voting to a most annoying extent, and turned with fresh interest and avidity to schemes for social improvement . . . The middle class sympathise with the lower in their craving for physical comfort. They will not concede them power . . . but they will go to almost any length to improve their material condition . . . The vote for the education of the poor has become a visible item in the estimates . . . The masses, if not contented, have at least arrived at the conviction that they are not wilfully injured . . .<sup>37</sup>

The trade unionism of the middle years of the century produced the Reform Act of 1867 and the social legislation of the early 'seventies. The Reform Act of 1832 had enfranchised the People in Brougham's sense: 'By the people I mean the middle class, the wealth and intelligence of the country, the glory of the British name.'<sup>38</sup> The Reform Act of 1867 enfranchised the People as the skilled artisans, the trade-union aristocracy, viewed them. Mill's proposal to give



women the vote found seventy-three supporters; no one then proposed to give the vote to farm laborers.

The Act of 1867 was the outcome of a number of popular movements in all of which organized labor played a part. Libraries maintained by unions, as well as public libraries in cities, Mechanics Institutes with artisan and middle-class membership, workingmen's colleges, and increased newspaper circulation since the removal of the newspaper tax in 1855,\* all contributed to the education of skilled workers. The *Beehive*, for twenty years an organ of the larger unions, as well as *Reynolds' Newspaper*, kept alive the political agitation of the Chartists. The Junta took its stand on gaining political power as a means of economic advance; its leaders stated in 1862 that 'all the evils under which we suffer have a common origin, namely, an excess of political power in the hands of those holding a higher social position.'<sup>39</sup> The International Workingmen's Association, formed in September 1864, with Odger, a prominent member of a British union of highly skilled workers, as president and Marx as one of its members, had seventeen British unions affiliated by 1866, and was active in arousing British workers to political consciousness.\* Threats from the government to the status of the trade unions under the Friendly Societies Act intensified this political awareness and were a factor leading to the formation of the National Reform League in 1864.<sup>40</sup> The League, which had the active support of practically all prominent trade unionists and which by the end of 1866 numbered 63 metropolitan and 170 provincial branches, constantly brought pressure on the middle-class Reform Union in favor of a wider franchise. Agitation and mass meetings reinforced the work of the League, and the result was the proposal by the Liberals and the final enact-

\* Cf. Ch. ix, pp. 366-71.

† F. E. Gillespie, *Labor and Politics in England, 1850-1867*, Duke University Press, 1927, pp. 222-7. British workers had also been influenced by the American Civil War and by Italian political developments through Garibaldi. Their activity in the International was not great after 1871 Cf. Rothstein, *From Chartism to Labourism*, pp. 124 ff.

ment by the Conservatives of an Act giving the franchise to the large majority of urban male workers.<sup>41</sup>

To the middle class in power an extension of political power to workers would be 'constructive' only in case the workers responded in the spirit of the grant and forebore to use their new power against their benefactors. But would labor be so discreet? A pamphlet published at Liverpool in 1864 was entitled *The Danger of a Democratic Reaction and Suggestions for Placing the Franchise in a Sound and Defensible State While Still Possible*.<sup>42</sup> Bagehot wrote five years after the Act:

It is too soon as yet to attempt to estimate the effect of the Reform Act of 1867. The people enfranchised under it do not yet know their own power; a single election, so far from teaching us how they will use that power, has not been even enough to explain to them that they have such power.<sup>43</sup>

Even before Bagehot wrote or the Reform Bill had passed, labor groups had had enough organized power to be influential in securing such legislation as the Ten Hour Factory Act of 1850 and the Health Act of 1858. In the years following 1867 'the people enfranchised' knew their power enough to be instrumental in producing a flood of such legislation. The influence of the new voters was felt not only in such distinctly 'labor' legislation as the Acts of 1874 and 1875 giving legal recognition and immunity to trade unions, the Coal and Metalliferous Mines Acts of 1872, the Factory Act of 1875 raising the minimum age of employment in textile factories to ten years, and the Plimsoll Act of 1876 protecting seamen from the overloading of ships. Labor also had a large part in the Act of 1870 for the first time making public provision for education outside the Church, in the Public Health Acts of 1872 and 1875, the Cross Housing Act of 1876, and the Civil Service Reform of 1870.\*

Such an expanding stream of social legislation could not but confirm the fears of the pessimists and whet the expectation of the workers. Here was change with a vengeance, and

\* Cf. Ch v, pp. 156-65, on social legislation.

it would not be long before the gentlemen's truce between employers and employees would have to give way to more open recognition of the structure of power implicit in industrialism.

Trade-union leaders of the Junta and various Trade Councils were responsible for some of the pressure which produced this legislation. But they were also forced on to further action by insurgent groups in their own unions. Many of these groups were not content with the specific pieces of social legislation wrung from Conservative or Liberal Governments. During the years of plenty between 1871 and 1875 rebel groups sprang up in a number of unions and either conducted unauthorized strikes or formed unions of their own. At the beginning of 1875 British trade unions had attained a peak of prosperity never reached before. Membership doubled between 1872 and 1874, reaching 1,190,900 members in 1874.<sup>44</sup> Union power was sufficient 'to cause the employers much distress of mind, and forced them to organize themselves "for the safety of capital, the protection of labor, and the prosperity of the country against the attacks of the Trade Unions." ' \* Despite expressions of militancy, however, the upsurge of trade unionism in the early 'seventies, in contrast to that of the 'thirties, was marked by the 'moderation with which the workmen claimed merely to receive some share of the enormous profits of those good times.' <sup>45</sup>

It is characteristic of the official trade-union position at this period that after the favorable union legislation of 1875 'it needed an effort on the part of the more combative Trades leaders both in 1875 and 1876 to prevent the annual Trade Union Congresses and the Parliamentary Committee, which acted as their permanent organ, from being wound up as no longer necessary . . . ' <sup>46</sup> Such inertia suggests how little the

\* These words are taken from a manifesto to the National Federation of Associated Employers of Labour founded in the early 'seventies to resist the growing power of trade unions. (Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, Revised ed., 1920, pp. 326-7.)

labor movement of 1875 had of long-range program, and of strategy based on concepts of class conflict. Rather, it lived from hand to mouth in terms of immediate issues, and when its right as a competitive bargainer was recognized in the 'seventies it was prepared to accept its cause as won and even to consider abandoning its strategic machinery.

Then in 1875 the honeymoon of British industry and labor, in which it had seemed that all problems could be solved in a sound British fashion, came to an end. The 'great depression' began. For the capitalists it meant that the easy takings, with enough to spill over as extra concessions to labor, were not so secure as each boom generation had tended to believe them, and was a rude reminder that business is a stern master allowing no romantic utopian treatment of one's workers. For groups of workers becoming assertive it shook the basis of faith both in remote expectation of unlimited progress and in the immediate realization of tangible gains through their own efforts.

The depression first affected coal and iron workers; wages of coal miners in Scotland were reduced by a shilling a day as early as 1874,<sup>47</sup> although their pre-depression period of trade-union advance reached its peak in this year. In the following years both prices and the sliding-wage scales which followed them came tumbling down: in 1875 miners and iron workers in South Wales were forced to accept a 12½ per cent wage cut after having struck to protest a 10 per cent cut; the following year the depression spread to the textile trades with similar effects, and in 1877 to the building trades, resulting in the virtual collapse of some of the most important carpenters' and joiners' unions. Unemployment reached as much as a quarter of the membership of some unions.<sup>48</sup> Strikes and lockouts were chronic in important industries throughout the United Kingdom during the last years of the 'seventies, usually ending in overwhelming defeat for the workers and the rout of trade-union forces. A private circular issued by the Iron Trade Employers' Association in December 1878 stated:

It has appeared to employers of labour that the time has arrived when the superfluous wages which have been dissipated in unproductive consumption must be retrenched, and when the idle hours which have been unprofitably thrown away must be reclaimed to industry and profit by being redirected to reproductive work.<sup>49</sup>

Heavy defeat in great strikes amongst the cotton operatives, builders, engineers, and other skilled workers had broken the militant spirit of organized labor, and offered an easy excuse 'for the innate conservatism and caution of the men who controlled the Trade Unions and dominated the Trade Union Congress.'<sup>50</sup>

As the years 1874 and 1875 had marked a peak in trade-union prosperity the end of the 'seventies marked a new low point. The national organizations newly established among miners and agricultural workers broke up; sectionalism returned; many unions disappeared altogether; total membership probably dropped back to the 1871 level of little more than 600,000.<sup>51</sup> But the collapse was not as great as it had been after the trade-union boom of the 'thirties. Unions varying from benefit societies to purely trade organizations were still in existence; trade-union councils were held; a core of organization remained.

British labor at the opening of the 'eighties could draw on a number of divergent sources for interpretation of the scene which even *The Times* described as combining 'more circumstances of misfortune and depression than any within general experience.' \* There was the policy of the old-line trade-union leaders still in control, a policy which looked to employers and to politicians as allies, and which feared anything which might disturb that alliance whether the disturbance came from external causes or from other groups of workers. This policy was most fully exemplified in the powerful engineering and shipbuilding unions and to a lesser extent among the miners and railway workers. There was the

\* *Times* editorial, 1 January 1880. Cf. Ch. I, p. 4, for further excerpts from this editorial.

memory of successful revolts against this official course in the prosperous early 'seventies by insurgent groups of engineers and miners, independent textile workers, even agricultural workers. These groups looked to other laborers rather than to employers as allies. There was the lesson of the continuing depression which had wiped out these gains. But what was this lesson? Did it show that economic progress, even under middle-class British auspices, was not automatic; and, that therefore workers should not accept sliding scales and similar adjuncts of prosperity but should develop a fighting program? Or did it show that workers should not further encumber the economic system with strikes lest, as had actually happened, they invite retaliation and further loss of what gains they had made? There was, further, the political record since the Second Reform Bill, with Conservative and Liberal parties alternately buying working-class support with concessions—up to a point—and the question whether these concessions were enough to satisfy the expectations which the workers now held. More remotely, there was a hazy awareness of Continental socialism and the knowledge that workers in other countries did not do things the British way.

The history of British labor in the 'eighties is the record of the struggle of these various forces for mastery—with the new one contributed by the emergence of British Socialism. In studying the interplay of these various elements it is important to see in more detail the precise nature of the 'old unionism' which solidly dominated the scene and against which any newer policies had to assert themselves. In the early 'eighties trade-union membership was confined in the main to skilled workers in the old established 'heavy' industries. At the Trade Union Congress in September 1880, the delegates represented 600,000 workers, the strongest unions being the miners' with 50,000 members, the engineers' with 45,000, the boilermakers' with 20,000, and the railway workers' with 15,000.\* Externally, these trade unions had won

\* R. H. Gretton, *A Modern History of the English People*, New York, Dial Press, 1930, p. 31. By 1897 the coal miners and the cotton operatives together constituted one-fifth of the total trade-union membership. (Sidney

legal recognition and freedom from interference through the legislation of 1874 and 1875. Any attempt to modify this independence through making trade unions liable to suit by disaffected persons was vigorously opposed. In the internal organization of the unions, distrust of centralization appeared in the fact that every attempt to form a general federation had failed; the trade-union world 'was broken up into struggling groups, destitute of any common purpose, each mainly preoccupied with its separate concerns, and frequently running counter to the policy or aims of the rest.'<sup>52</sup>

The Junta, the cabinet of salaried trade-union officials centered in London, had in the 'sixties embodied the policy of conciliatory, respectable trade unionism, cautious in trade matters, energetic in political reform, which made them influential in government circles. The organization of the Trades Union Council at Manchester in 1868 had represented local initiative in developing a national movement and to some extent a challenge to the authority of the Junta. During the 'seventies the influence of the Junta was weakening and the center of influence was shifting from London to the provinces. But 'The result of the shifting from London was . . . not the establishment elsewhere of any new executive centre of the Trade Union Movement but the rise of a sectional spirit, the promotion of sectional interests, and the elaboration of sectional policies on the part of the different trades.'<sup>53</sup> From 1880 to 1885 the annual Trade Union Congress and the Parliamentary Committee constituted almost the only common bond between isolated and often hostile sections. This development of sectionalism, freeing the energy of the union rank and file from the compromising bureaucracy, was not without its influence in bringing about the 'new unionism' at the end of the decade.

The aims and methods of the old unionism, which were based on tactical rather than strategic initiative, were being asserted more strongly than ever at the very time that these policies and the jobs of the bureaucratic leaders they in-

and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, London, Longmans, 1920. First edition [and basis for dates] 1897, p. 38.)

volved were being threatened—threatened not only by the impact of the depression on the unions but by sections of the movement protesting the entrenched leadership. Leaders of the old unions were affirming laissez-faire when industrial development was rendering it obsolete, and advocating cautious conciliation when factions within their own groups were beginning to insist more strongly on forthright initiative.

The specific working of *this* policy as it operated during the 'eighties appears most clearly, not from any documents of the decade, but from the statements of the old trade-union leaders summoned to testify before the Royal Commission on Labour from 1891 to 1893. This Commission, set up by the Conservative Government alarmed at the growth of the 'new' unionism, included seven trade unionists on the Commission of twenty-eight members, but only one of them, Tom Mann, represented the new school. A Minority Labour Report was published dealing with more basic issues than the 'avoidance of industrial disputes,' which was the concern of the Majority, but three of the trade unionists of the Commission refused to sign this. The great majority of the labor witnesses called before the Commission were representative leaders of the old school. Because of the power of the unions which they dominated and of the close control in which they held these unions \* their statements carry special weight. In reading this testimony dated 1891 or 1892 we are actually reading a record of the ingrained policies and activities that were dominant in British trade unions from the late 'seventies to 1888 or 1890. What these men said in the early 'nineties was an accurate account of what they did in the 'eighties, the aims they had sought, the methods they had followed.

\* The following summarizes the position of trade-union organization as it appeared to the Majority of the Commission on Labour from the testimony presented by the old trade unionists: '[The most permanent and successful union] will include . . . such a proportion of men in a trade as will give it a controlling power in the trade and enable it to treat with employers as representatives of the whole . . . It will have a strong central executive council . . . This . . . will enable the society to negotiate with employers with the least possible friction . . .' (Royal Commission on Labour, *General Review of Evidence, Fifth and Final Report*, Part I, Vol. xxxv, 1894, p. 29.)



A profound cleavage between the 'old' and the 'new' unionism concerned the different importance they assigned to mutual benefits as over against collective bargaining and better wage and working conditions. The maintenance of benevolent funds for unemployment presupposes that it is the responsibility of workers themselves to carry the burden of unemployment. It represents labor acceptance of middle-class philosophy in an extreme form. The old unions regarded benefit funds as essential for securing members. But use of the fund went further; it proved a perfect instrument for control of the rank and file by the union bureaucracy. 'In a strong and well-organized union, the existence of important friendly benefits may become a powerful instrument for maintaining discipline among the members, and for enforcing upon all the decisions of the majority.'<sup>54</sup> In other words, threat of withdrawal of benefits could be used to prevent a vote to strike.

Mr. Robert Knight, general secretary of the Boilermakers' and Iron (and Steel) Shipbuilders' Society, the acme of the development of the old union leadership in closely organized artisans' unions,\* was eloquent on the central importance of

\* Mr Knight led a union which had been in existence since 1832, and in the early 'nineties had a membership of over 37,000. Its affairs were directed by a tightly held and administered executive council. The Webbs, whose *Industrial Democracy* is a long discourse on 'efficient' union organization treat Mr Knight as a paragon among his bureaucratic brethren 'Mr. Knight's unquestioned superiority in Trade Union statesmanship, together with the invariable support of the executive committee, have enabled him to construct, out of the nominally independent district delegates, a virtual cabinet . . . From the written constitution of the society, we should suppose that it was from the evening meetings of the little Newcastle committee of working platers and riveters that emanated all those national treaties . . . that have excited the admiration of economic students . . . What actually happens is that, in any high issue of policy, Mr Knight summons his district delegates to meet him in council . . . to conduct with him the weighty negotiations which the Newcastle executive formally endorses And although the actual administration of the benefits is conducted by the branch committees, the absolute centralization of funds and the supreme disciplinary power vested in the executive committee makes that committee, or rather the general secretary, as dominant in matters of finance as in trade policy.' (*Industrial Democracy*, pp. 30-31.)

When Mr. Knight finally retired 'it was revealed that he had been a share-

benefit funds. He testified that over 96 per cent of the funds of the Boilermakers' and Shipbuilders' Union were used for benevolent purposes and less than 4 per cent for trade disputes. This union spent approximately £100,000 yearly for sickness, accident, and unemployment benefits.

That such an emphasis on benevolent funds was characteristic of the old unions rather than exceptional in the case of this one powerful union appears from the Report of the Commission on Labour:

In some cases the funds for 'trade' and 'friendly and benevolent' purposes are kept distinct, but in most cases all purposes are met out of a single fund. It is alleged that the system of a single fund tends to make societies more peacefully disposed, and more cautious how they embark on trade conflicts, inasmuch as strikes seriously impair the funds available for friendly and benevolent purposes. This has sometimes been urged by the leaders of what has been called 'new unionism' as a reason for objecting to a society having any benevolent purposes at all, lest its fighting efficiency should be diminished.<sup>55</sup>

Existence of benevolent funds became in itself a compelling argument of the craft unions against a more inclusive type of industrial organization. As Mr. Knight remarked:

We have to pay a large sum of money for out-of-work benefit, and if we were to introduce *the labour element* into our Union we should have such an enormous call upon the funds of our Society that we could not stand it. (*Italics mine.*)<sup>56</sup>

Thus, before the old unions could cease to be jealous little pockets of privilege entrenched against the rest of labor and gave way to the new unionism that saw and fought for labor's common cause, the emphasis on the benevolent function of trade unionism had to recede into the background.

A second major difference between the old and new unionism, as is implied by the last statement quoted from Mr. Knight, concerned the question who should be admitted to membership. A major purpose of the old unions was 'to wage

holder in the shipbuilding and dock companies against which his union had to fight.' (Rothstein, op. cit. p. 192.)

merciless war upon intruders into the craft, whether general labourers or other craftsmen.' \* Workers outside one's own craft were regarded not as potential allies in a struggle with employers but as potential enemies in a struggle for jobs and for wages. The often-quoted motto of laissez-faire, "Each for himself and God for all of us," as the elephant said when he danced among the chickens,' applied just as much to the attitude of entrenched trade unionists toward other workers as to the attitude of competing industrialists.

This policy appeared in the insistence of such unions as the Boilermakers' and Iron Shipbuilders', the Cutlery Unions, and the Stonemasons on strict limitation on the number of apprentices. The theory that the sole way to better conditions of workers in a particular field was to restrict the number of workers in that field offered only a limited number of possibilities. Fostering emigration through union funds had been given up by the unions because the results in diminishing the amount of surplus labor did not seem to justify the expenditure.<sup>57</sup> Limitation of apprentices, a practice which also had a long tradition, appeared to be more feasible and more fruitful. In 1883 the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in Sunderland conducted an unsuccessful strike for nearly two years and a half because the Employers' Association refused to concede any limitation on the number of apprentices. The employers fought such restriction on the grounds that it would tend to force up the general standard of wages and, furthermore, that it constituted 'an invasion of their just right to conduct their works in such a way as they thought fit.' † The Boilermakers, as described by Mr. Knight,

\* G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People*, London, Methuen, 1938, p. 388. This is stated as one of the purposes of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, but it applied equally to other unions of the old school.

† John Haswell, secretary of the Sunderland branch of the Iron Trades Employers' Association and of the Wear Shipbuilders' Association, testimony before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 27 July 1892, *Third Report*, Vol. XXXII, 1893, pp. 352-3. This policy prevailed in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers down to 1885. Thereafter a gradual relaxation of the requirements took place. (Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, p. 472)

had worked out a meticulous system of limiting apprentices to one to five journeymen, declaring that:

We cannot, and will not, allow our trade to be ruined by an unlimited influx of lads and men at all ages coming into the trade . . . we . . . know by comparing the men that are employed with the men that are out of work, and on the funds of our Society, that there are more than enough men in the trade to supply the trade of building vessels.<sup>58</sup>

As labor, under the influence of the new unionism, made use of other methods of bettering conditions, emphasis on restricting numbers of apprentices receded. The Webbs concluded that by 1897 less than half of the 1,400,000 trade-union members carried out such limitation in the strict form practiced by the Boilermakers.<sup>59</sup> But in the early 'eighties it was still one of the characteristic features of most of the strongest unions.

The tendency of the trade-union movement to split into mutually hostile units appeared in the 'demarcation disputes' through which the old unions fought bitterly to keep any 'outsiders' out of a particular craft or a particular job. These disputes were especially acute in unions such as the Iron Shipbuilders' where new inventions or processes rendered an earlier division of labor obsolete.

Each society proposes . . . to have the largest possible number of its members employed at the same time, and paid as highly as possible, and to this end tries to secure the whole of the work it considers belongs to its members according to usage and custom, resorting to strikes to force their objects upon employers, or other societies.\*

Disputes occurred between platers and 'helpers,' between engineers and boilermakers and joiners, between boilermakers and clippers and drillers, between joiners and patternmakers, between fitters and plumbers, between shipwrights and caulkers, and between skilled workers of any

\* John Price, general manager of Palmer and Co., Limited, Shipbuilders and Engineers, Jarrow, testimony before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 9 August 1892, *Third Report*, Vol. xxxii, 1893, p. 405.

kind and 'labour.' Nowhere was competition more bitter than between rival crafts, and in some districts, such as in shipbuilding on the Tyneside, strikes not against employers, but against rival unions were a constant feature of the industry.\*

Bitterness among different groups of workers was intensified by the fact that 'rising in the trade' was restricted to certain classes of workers. This was true among the iron-moulders, engineers, and shipbuilders, as well as the boilermakers.

'There are certain divergencies of interest between the members of your Union and the members of the Tyneside Labour Union?' Mr. Knight was asked. He replied:

There ought not to be if we could only get the labourers to keep their places . . .

*Ques.* Yes, but if you carry that principle very far you would separate the working classes into cast-iron divisions, and it would be impossible for a man to pass over from the class to which he belonged to another class. Do you think that would be desirable? *Ans.* I do not think it would be desirable for a man of one class to go to another class . . .<sup>60</sup>

In emphasis upon benevolent funds and in insistence on craft exclusiveness the old unions maintained a position the reverse of that held by the new unions at the end of the 'eighties. Certain specific aims, however, the two groups of unions had in common. The old unions wanted for their members higher wages; they wanted shorter hours and elimination of overtime; they wanted fuller employment; and they wanted safety in mines, quarries, and other dangerous places of work. But all these things they wanted 'in so far

\* Demarcation disputes were fought on grounds of 'rights,' not expediency. 'We are fighting this battle,' declared the United Pattern-makers' Association in 1889, 'on the principle that every trade shall have the right to earn its bread without interference of outsiders' (Circular of United Pattern-makers' Association, 19 December 1889). 'It is our duty,' declared the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 'to exercise the same care and watchfulness over that in which we have a vested interest as the physician does who holds a diploma or the author who is protected by copyright.' (Preface to *Rules of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers*, London, 1891, p. 6. Quoted in Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, p. 515.)

as possible.' \* 'In so far as possible' was the key to their position. It meant without antagonizing employers or in any way jeopardizing their own positions or the position of their unions as pacific, respectable, established parts of the working apparatus of the industrial community, gradually extending the benefits of capitalism more and more to their skilled workers. The day after John Burns had been arrested with three others for his participation in the Trafalgar Square meeting of February 1886, his and 'any other politics' were publicly disclaimed by his union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.<sup>61</sup>

The policy of making each specific union goal secondary to the aim of co-operation with employers appeared in the way these separate goals were approached. In regard to wages, there was no general policy of securing a minimum living wage for workers. Sliding scales were fought by some unions as the depression demonstrated their inadequacy, but as late as 1892 some groups of old unionists, such as the Durham Miners' Association, still defended the sliding scale on the ground that it was 'the best means of averting disputes between owners and workmen.' † The *Digest of Evidence* presented to the Royal Commission noted that a sliding scale is advantageous not only because it 'prevents many a quarrel,

\* Cf. the aims of trade unions as summarized by the Majority Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, largely on the basis of old trade union policy:

'To obtain such conditions as will enable them to deal in a body with their employers, and ultimately perhaps to acquire, *so far as possible*, a monopoly of employment in their respective trades. It may be added that most unions would probably be willing, and some unions actually offer, to supply employers with suitable workmen, the union acting as an agency for this purpose . . .

To distribute the available work among members so that *as few as possible* shall be out of employment . . .

In general, to improve the conditions of labour, protect members or groups of members from hard usage on the part of employers and managers, and *to maintain trade customs and privileges.* [Italics mine.] (Royal Commission on Labour, *Fifth and Final Report*, Part 1, p. 29.)

† Testimony of William Hammond Patterson, secretary of the Durham Miners' Federation and of the Durham Federation, before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 8 July 1891, *First Report*, Vol. xxxiv, 1892, p. 3.

and lightens the labour and expense of the joint boards,' but also because 'fluctuations in wages are always several weeks behind the fluctuations in prices, so that both parties . . . can set their houses in order . . . This is an especial advantage to employers.'<sup>62</sup> Any policy of securing a minimum wage even through union action was approached tentatively, and the idea of a government minimum wage was definitely opposed.

In regard to regulation of hours the opinion of the old unionists was, in general, opposed to uniformity of hours although in favor of regulation in a particular craft, and was particularly opposed to any establishment of a state minimum. The typical old Trade Unionist spirit was that which led Mr. Toyn of the Cleveland Miners' Association to say: 'If an eight hours' day were given by law, instead of by organised effort, the workers would not be persuaded to organise at all.'<sup>63</sup>

The Secretary of the Durham Cokemen's Association testified:

We are bitterly opposed to any legislative interference with the hours of labour in any shape or form so far as cokemen are concerned. As far as our own trade is concerned it is an impossibility to fix any normal number of hours as a day's wage.\*

None of these specific reforms, it is clear, was as important to the old unionists as the maintenance of the existing system in which employers' associations and trade unions each had their appropriate places. Mr. Knight, who was so definite on the necessity of class stratification of labor, was equally emphatic on making close alliance with employers a prime requisite of trade unionism:

It is assumed by many that capital and labour, instead of being invaluable allies, are irreconcilable enemies, and the more that can be extracted from the one, the better it is for the other. This is a great mistake, and one sided views of this kind are very dangerous, as it tends to produce and keep up feelings of alienation, if not hostility, between classes whose agreement is impor-

\* Testimony of Ernest Foster before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 6 August, 1891, Vol. xxxiv, 1892, p. 165.

tant, equally for the interest of both employers and workmen and for the peace of society.<sup>64</sup>

A corollary of this central policy of 'reasonableness' with employers was avoidance of strikes not only 'as far as possible' but almost at all costs. No complete figures on number of strikes are available until 1891, when the keeping of labor statistics began under the Labour Department of the Board of Trade. But from the records available it seems clear that until the end of the 'eighties the strike was deprecated as an unfortunate union instrument,\* by union leaders as well as by employers, and that in the 'nineties it was coming to be regarded as an indispensable means of enforcing labor demands.

The no-strike policy of the unions had encountered few difficulties during the prosperous early 'seventies. Strikes broke out in the late 'seventies in largely unsuccessful attempts to resist wage slashes and hour increases; throughout the 'eighties there were intermittent strikes against the practice of contracting out of the Employers' Liability Act, against the sliding wage scale, for shorter hours and against overtime work, and against special practices such as use of the 'character-inquiry' note.<sup>65</sup> But the Commission on Labour was able to report:

Taking all British trades collectively, the aggregate direct loss in wages due to strikes does not amount to one fifth of 1 per cent. of the wages paid annually . . . The average duration of a strike, moreover, is about three weeks, and the wages lost for so

\* Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, p. 895. The Webbs state 'it is desirable if [collective bargaining] exists that it should be carried on without friction.' (P 204)

The very incomplete record of strikes on the basis of those mentioned in *The Times* between 1876 and 1889 was as follows:

1876..... 17	1880. . . . 46	1884..... 31	1888. : . 37
1877..... 23	1881..... 20	1885..... 20	1889... .111
1878..... 38	1882..... 14	1886. . . . 24	
1879..... 72	1883..... 26	1887. .... 27	

(Compiled by the Webbs, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 347, n. 1.)

The more complete records of the Labour Department of the Board of Trade show that, between 1891 and 1899 there were never fewer than 700 'stoppages through dispute' each year. (*Ibid.* p. 602 n. 1.)



short a time can, in most cases, be made up for by the end of the year.<sup>66</sup>

It was not until the end of the 'eighties with the rise of the new unionism that strikes, while still officially deprecated by the new unions, came to be evaluated in terms of the ends to be gained rather than in terms of effect upon relations with employers.

When protests arose within the old unions against the policy of conciliation at all costs, discipline was enforced to the extent of compelling members to pay indemnity for unauthorized strikes. Mr. Knight described this discipline as it operated in the Boilermakers' and Iron Shipbuilders' Union:

. . . there was a deputation sent from our office to the Clyde, and we had a conference with the employers . . . and knowing, as we did . . . that things were becoming slack, our council decided to accept a reduction of 5 per cent., and I was instructed on behalf of the Society, that if I could make terms with the employers at 5 per cent, I was to do so. That was done; but the men on the Clyde then refused to accept the reduction, and they came out on strike . . .

Our council did not sanction the strike, nor did they give them any assistance whatever from the Society's fund. The members went in again upon the conditions that had been arranged between the Employers' Association and ourselves . . . [there used to be] a continued upheaval . . . going on, and at last the employers found it was to their advantage to recognize the Society, and they did so, and we have worked together since then amicably . . . With regard to the north-east coast we have not had a general strike for the last 15 years . . .\*

*Ques.* Do you think that if your associates generally were guided by such wisdom . . . in first recognising that capital and labour have identically the same interest . . . it would be conducive to the well-being of the operatives? *Ans.* That is certainly my opinion. We have always gone on that principle. We at all times seek to do our very utmost . . . to mete out justice, both to the men and the employers whom we have to deal with.<sup>67</sup>

\* When shipbuilders secured unauthorized high wages Mr. Knight's council compelled the return of the additional wages to the shipowners.

Although no other union went as far as the Boilermakers' in control over its members or in co-operation with employers, this spirit was characteristic of the old trade unionism between the 'fifties and the 'nineties. A 'Joint Committee' for settling disputes had been in existence between the Cleveland mine owners and the Miners' Union since 1872, and a similar committee in Durham facilitated local arbitration. In some cases employers and employed joined in a 'mixed association' for purposes of arbitration and conciliation, although each group maintained its separate organization as well.<sup>68</sup> In certain branches of the shipbuilding trade this mixed association became a permanent 'Court of Conciliation.'

With such an attitude on the part of trade-union leaders it is not surprising that unions were believed to be of benefit to the workers 'and also of benefit to the employers,' \* or even that 'a sound organisation of the men would sometimes be even more in the interests of the employers than of the men'! <sup>69</sup> In 1907 Richard Bell in a book on trade unionism wrote: 'Our trade unions have benefited industry, the capitalists as well as the workmen.'<sup>70</sup> The 'sound organisation' which produced this happy state of affairs was, of course, unionism of a particular kind. It necessitated that the executive of the union 'should have control over its members,' † and that the men 'have leaders who lead them wisely, and do not take rash steps.' ‡ Under such circumstances unions could indeed take their place as an established part of industrial capitalism.

A trade unionism focused upon co-operation with employers naturally did not conceive as part of its role the setting up of a rival political party challenging the authority of

\* Testimony of Benjamin Morris, colliery deputy and member of the Derbyshire Miners' Union, before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 11 December 1891, Vol. xxxiv, 1892, p. 454.

† Testimony of Frank Stobart, agent of Lord Durham in charge of his collieries, before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 23 July 1891, *ibid.* p. 116.

‡ Testimony of Benjamin Morris cited above.

existing political institutions agreeable to the employers. If co-operation within the British system of economic enterprise seemed appropriate, acceptance of the supporting British system of politics followed.

Organized labor had been influential in securing wider suffrage and in securing or preventing special legislation. But these things were regarded as carrying out established policy, not as innovation. Unions had even worked for some labor representation in Parliament, but they were too much a part of the British system to think of or plan for the strategy of seeking to dominate Parliament consistently to stated ends. Throughout the 'seventies and early 'eighties there was continual question among union members how far workers as workers—or unions as unions—should be concerned with politics at all, but, in so far as they were, there was no question about their acting through existing parties and institutions; they should not inaugurate any separate policy involving basic institutional change.

After the Second Reform Act, it was good union policy to work through Parliament for certain measures of interest to labor, *provided* (1) that these were neither matters of 'general political interest' nor, on the other hand, matters which could better be handled directly by the unions themselves; and (2) that any such activity was carried on through existing political parties and through established methods of political action. It was appropriate to support legal safeguarding of unions, safety in mines, and public education; it was inappropriate to support government regulation of hours or wages or, beyond a few specific points, regulation of the conditions of adult labor. It was appropriate in general to support the Liberals as supposedly closer than the Tories to labor interests; the Liberal-Labour Alliance began in 1875.\*

\* Humphrey describes the reason for forming this alliance as follows: 'The class struggle, to them [the Liberal-Labour section], was largely a struggle between the landed aristocracy and the rest of the people. When organised Labour began to be an active influence in politics, the middle class—broadly speaking, the Liberal party—had only enjoyed political power for a few decades. There was an atmosphere of Liberty about the party . . . The rising Labour movement was, in religion, overwhelmingly Nonconformist, and the

But in keeping with the general tactical opportunism, it was no less appropriate to support the Conservative Party when it momentarily happened to offer more. Talk of separate labor action was heretical and disruptive and likely to disturb the existing order.

The London Workingmen's Association of the 'sixties had stated that to ask for 'exceptional laws' for the benefit of the workers would mark its members as 'foolish and irrational visionaries.' When this organization was succeeded by the Labour Representation League dominated by the Junta, the same mildness prevailed. In the 'seventies and 'eighties this conciliatory policy of shrewd caution and practical opportunism carried over to the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, a Committee always composed of the officials of the more important unions and with a membership which scarcely changed between 1875 and 1889. The legalization of trade unions in 1875 was the great achievement of this policy; thereafter there was little to work for in its terms. 'To the Parliamentary Committee of 1875-85, as to the Liberal legislators, every demand for securing of conditions of labour by legislation appeared as an invidious exception only to be justified by the special helplessness or incompetency of the applicants.' \* In 1882 and 1883 the Trade Union Congress rejected resolutions in favor of universal suffrage as 'inopportune.' It was not until 1886, eighteen years after its first meeting, that the Trade Union Congress

opposition of the advanced wing of Liberalism to a State Church naturally appealed to it. Add to this the fact that a group of sturdy Radicals, men who were nominally Liberals . . . were strong advocates of the extended franchise, . . . and it is obvious that there were strong influences at work to bring Liberal-Labourism into being.' (A. W. Humphrey, *A History of Labour Representation*, London, Constable, 1912, pp. 119-20.)

\* Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 369 'A significant proof of this unconscious conversion of prominent Trade Unionists to the economic Individualism of the Liberal party is to be found in the unanimity with which a Trade Union Congress could repeatedly press for such "reforms" as Peasant Proprietorship, the purchase by the artisan of his own cottage, the establishment of "self-governing workshops," the multiplication of patents in the hands of individual workmen, and other changes which would cut at the root of Trade Unionism or any collective control of the means of production.'

decided that it lay within its province to set up some machinery for labor representation in Parliament.

During the active first half of the 'seventies trade unions had been too busy extending trade-union organization and securing certain economic gains to pay much attention to sending workers to Parliament, and during the depression years of the last half of the 'seventies they had been too harassed to do more than try—unsuccessfully—to conserve their gains. At two Trade Union Congresses, those of 1875 and 1876, resolutions were passed that 'it was the duty of Trade Unions and other bodies of workingmen to miss no opportunity of sending to Parliament men of their own order'; but these resolutions were not actively followed up, with the result that the labor-representation movement was left without the support of the trade-union movement as a whole. The Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress meanwhile, according to Mr. Broadhurst, who was its secretary for fifteen years, fulfilled the function of the Radical wing of the Liberal Party and exerted itself 'not merely for the working classes, but on behalf of the community at large.'<sup>71</sup>

In 1878 George Howell of the Bricklayers' Society, secretary of the National Reform League, published *Conflicts of Capital and Labour*. He discussed fit objects for the expenditure of trade-union funds, but did not include labor representation in Parliament among them. Since the Chartist demand for 'payment of members' of Parliament had not been won this meant the practical exclusion of workingmen from Parliament. The issue did not seem crucial to a man like Howell, even to the extent of proposing some means of support for labor members.

The Second Reform Act had made labor representation in Parliament a practical possibility. Earlier, working-class candidates for Parliament had occasionally been put forward by some one or another of the various labor-representation leagues. But they were labor candidates only in the sense that they were or had been workingmen. Sending any workers to Parliament was thought of as a bold step in itself, and work-

ers in Parliament were regarded as being there on sufferance and during good behavior. Howell expressed the general attitude when he noted with satisfaction that 'Mr. Speaker Peel, Mr. Courtney, chairman of the committee, and Sir Thomas Erskine May treated the labour members most courteously.' <sup>72</sup> In 1874 thirteen candidates stood as representatives of labor in the Liberal Party, and two, Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt, both miners, were elected. In 1880 Henry Broadhurst, a stone mason, made a third labor representative in Parliament. By 1885 the mounting dissatisfaction with the Liberal Party was reflected in the election of eight more. In 1892 five others were added.

Until the mid 'eighties these men were elected as and in Parliament acted with Liberals. The Conservative hope that the enfranchised workers would support them against the middle-class Liberal Party was not justified. In official working-class opinion the Liberals were friends of the workers, and the Liberal-Labour alliance formed in 1875 was never broken for long. Even the fact that it was the Conservative Government in 1875 that accorded recognition of the unions which had been refused by the Liberals did not shake this faith.

The election of Gladstone in 1880 marked the high point of labor's hope in the Liberal Party. Gladstone and other Liberal leaders did not seek labor adherents; Broadhurst and the others were thrust upon them. But once they were in Parliament Gladstone did not fight them, but embraced them, for example, by making Broadhurst Under-Secretary of State.\* But the years 1880-83 brought sharp disillusionment. If labor had not felt acutely the need for its own representation in Parliament because it believed itself and the Liberal Party to be traveling in essentially the same direction, it now

\* Cf. Beer's explanation of this embracing of Labour members by Liberals: 'The growing strength of socialism and Labour politics since 1880 may be gauged by the treatment which prominent trade unionists and socialists received at various times at the hands of Liberal Governments. In 1834 William Godwin, the anarchist communist author of *Political Justice*, received an appointment as gentleman usher; in 1849 Samuel Bamford, the Radical weaver and one of the leaders of the demonstration at Peterloo, was

became painfully aware that its confidence had been misplaced.

We have seen earlier the disappointment of workers in the Gladstone Government. The extent to which this disillusionment gradually extended to the labor members of Parliament who supported that Government is reflected in the changed attitude of *Reynolds' Newspaper*:

We hope to see Mr. Macdonald, Mr. Burt, Mr. Lee Croft, and Mr. Broadhurst returned, and if there is any other constituency in which working men are strong enough to command a majority, by all means let the working men make their claim upon the Liberal Party . . . else-where we think the clear policy of working men is to stand by the Liberal candidates who have the best chance of success. . . . (14 March 1880.)

*A Year of Shame and Humiliation . . .*

During the year what has been done to materially benefit the condition of the working classes? They had at its commencement three representatives in Parliament . . . to care for the institutions of about thirty millions of people! . . . One of these—Mr. Macdonald is dead, leaving the two others, Burt and Bradlaugh, hanging on to the skirts of the Government, and approving of everything it has done toward Ireland! (1 January 1882.)

*An Artisan Empire or Masters of England?*

We [Labour] have about as much real power as the child enjoys who tries to get hold of the stars. Nurse gives it a bit of coloured glass . . . and the little silly goes comforted to sleep. That is Labour's position. 'You have your star, for which you have been yelling so long,' suavely whispers caste and wealth. 'You have the vote and the chance of sending your own nominees to St. Stephen's.' Even so. And our two half-Whigs, half-Liberal, and very weak-kneed Radical Burt and Broadhurst are our bit of coloured glass, the empty make-believe.

made doorkeeper at Somerset House . . . In 1886, Henry Broadhurst, the Labour lieutenant of Gladstone, was appointed Under-Secretary of State; in 1892 Thomas Burt, Parliamentary Party Secretary; in 1906 John Burns entered the Cabinet. The difference between a doorkeeper of a Government building and a member of the Cabinet indicates the rise in the value of socialism and Labour politics from 1834 to 1906.' (Max Beer, *A History of British Socialism*, London, Bell, 1921, Vol. II, pp. 197-8.)

But it is no better materially with our class . . . Every manufacturing town in England could send a working man to Parliament if it chose, but if it content itself with men like Cowen and Chamberlain, it sacrifices conviction for capital. In other words, it returns the master and not the man. (8 January 1882.)

The outcome of this disaffection, which was to appear still more clearly in the second half of the decade, was the changed policy of the Trade Union Congress in 1886. It had been an insistent group of workers outside of the Junta which had organized the first Trade Union Congress in 1868, and it had been a resolute block outside the inner circle which kept the Congress in action after 1875. Year after year, during the lean years which followed, rebels against the mild, Liberal-minded Parliamentary Committee headed by Broadhurst, brought forward more radical proposals. In the mid 'eighties the insurgents were vigorously led by Kier Hardie, an intrepid Ayrshire miner, who gradually came from Liberalism to Socialism, and by John Burns and Tom Mann, both members of the ultra-conservative Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In 1879 a proposal for land nationalization had been defeated in the annual Congress; in 1882 a similar proposal was carried and shelved, and thereafter defeated in each year until 1887. In 1882, also, a proposal for a legal eight-hour day was carried and shelved. When Broadhurst and another prominent labor leader, Burnett, brought back a report from the first International Labour Congress at Paris in 1883, the full Parliamentary Committee found that 'there was too much talk of revolutionary principles and too little on practical questions, . . . to be of service to the workers.'<sup>73</sup> In 1886 Tom Mann burst out to his fellow trade unionists:

I readily grant that good work has been done in the past by the Unions; but, in Heaven's name, what good purpose are they serving now? . . . The true unionist policy of *aggression* seems entirely lost sight of: . . . the average unionist of to-day is a man with a fossilised intellect, either hopelessly apathetic, or supporting a policy that plays directly into the hands of the capitalist exploiter.<sup>74</sup>



Throughout the 'eighties the struggle between trade unionists who wanted a few practical tinkering with the existing system and those who insisted on basic institutional change was fought out in the annual Congresses.

In 1886 for the first time the Trade Union Congress actively interested itself in Parliamentary representation. The Congress set up a Labour Electoral Committee of the Trade Union Congress, which a year later became the Labour Electoral Association, with the definite purposes of increasing the number of labor representatives in Parliament and pledging labor candidates to work consistently in Parliament for labor interests.

In 1887, under Kier Hardie's leadership, the fight in the Trade Union Congress came further into the open. The old leaders were defeated in trying to prevent a meeting of the International Labour Congress and in opposing a resolution in favor of land nationalization.

The New Unionism and the Independent Labour Party were at hand.

The policy of the old unions of co-operation with employers rested upon a belief in Progress, but a progress which was dependent upon and limited by the existing economic-political system. This policy did not recognize dangers to progress from a new world situation, such as the threat to British trade of American and German competition, and from contradictions within British capitalism. Advance was to be along lines already laid down, including the competitive struggle of individuals and of separate industries and of crafts for economic advantage. The policy was a defensive one of standing firm, holding everything steady, protecting gains already achieved rather than striking out on new lines.

Between 1888 and 1892 union membership again doubled, reaching slightly over a million and a half members, approximately 300,000 more than the earlier peak in 1874. And the new three-quarters of a million members—which brought union membership from less than 10 per cent of the wage earners of the country to approximately 20 per cent of the

adult male working class<sup>75</sup>—were not a product of the old union policies. This New Unionism was more like the unionism of the 'thirties than of the 'sixties and early 'seventies; a new economic situation called forth a new version of militancy and aggression. 'Good unionism' had once more become a different thing.

The years of prosperity of the early 'seventies had intensified the confused sense of promise given by the Reform Act of 1867, and resulting anger and revolt against trade-union officials when in the late 'seventies these hopes were not realized. The ensuing revolts within the unions registered the conviction among some labor groups that frustration was not as inevitable as their bureaucratic leaders would encourage them to believe. The depression dramatically stamped in the lesson that progress and better conditions could not be counted on; natural law and docile collaboration with the middle class had not prevented the depression. Neither had individual thrift and self-help prevented widespread and continuous unemployment even after the worst of the depression was over. The five years of the Liberal Government made it clear that no great improvement of the workers' condition would come through Liberalism; the Liberal Party would make Broadhurst Under-Secretary but would countenance no 'pandering to socialism.' The Reform Act of 1884 extending the franchise to agricultural workers and the lifting of the depression brought renewed hope. Still the trade-union leaders did not move; still the Robert Knights did not want 'labour' in their unions. The old reliances on slow and orderly consummation, the people in power, and individual effort were giving way; both expectations and frustration were prompting men to demand sequences more immediate and reliable.

The new unionism, long preparing, came to birth swiftly and dramatically. Ben Tillett, a dock laborer, John Burns and Tom Mann, both engineers, with the aid of some members of the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation, had been working outside of the official trade-union movement to organize unskilled workers. Sudden and unex-

pected success of the match girls in 1888 \* and gas workers in 1889 † had caught the popular imagination and braced labor for further efforts. Riding this wave of new confidence, it was the 'great dock strike' of August 1889 that ushered in the full tide of the new unionism. For over two years a seemingly hopeless effort had been made to organize the shabby, incoherent rabble that fought morning after morning at the dock gates for each day's chance at this most casual labor.

That the dock strike came off at all may be regarded as the result of a series of somewhat fortuitous events: a minor dispute over the distribution of 'plus' (that is, bonus above the basic wage of 5*d.* an hour) on a certain cargo at the South-West India Dock; ‡ the reply of Mr. Norwood, M.P., to a deputation of the workers 'that he could promise them nothing until they were in a different state of mind'; § the immediate presence of Ben Tillett and John Burns and Tom Mann as organizers; the sympathetic strike of the other London dockers and stevedores and the threat of strikes in other ports; the fact that the directors of the docks were not alive to the power of the press and did not give their version of the

\* In July 1888, Mrs. Annie Besant of the Fabian Society published an indignant article in *The Link*, on the harsh conditions of women making lucifer matches. To the surprise of everyone, including Mrs. Besant, this had the result of leading nearly 700 match girls to strike. Still more unexpectedly their revolt brought support from persons of all classes; and although the match workers were entirely without funds, £400 quickly subscribed made possible the winning of substantial concessions from employers. Engels described the match girls' strike as 'the light jostle needed for the entire avalanche to move.' (Allen Hutt, *This Final Crisis*, London, Gollanz, 1935, p. 115.)

† A year after the match girls' strike, the Gas workers' and General Labourers' Union, whose organization had been built up slowly during the preceding two years, tested their strength by demanding a reduction from a twelve- to an eight-hour day. Again, to the surprise of everyone, the eight-hour day and even a slight increase of wages were conceded by the directors of the three leading London gas companies without a strike. Within a few weeks 90 per cent of the men were organized. (Tom Mann, *Memoirs*, London, Labour Publishing Co., 1923, p. 81.)

‡ R. H. Gretton, *A Modern History of the English People*, N. Y., Dial Press, 1930, p. 253. Gretton adds: 'He made the great mistake of miscalculating not only the possibility of organization among the men, but also the change in public opinion about the operation of laws of supply and demand.'

dispute to the newspapers and the public until much time had passed; <sup>77</sup> the unexpected and still unexplained pouring in of £30,000 from Australia and large sums from other countries at a time when it seemed that the strike might be lost for lack of funds.

But if this sequence of events—each crucial in its way, and certainly in its timing, to the final success of the strike—may be viewed as a series of lucky accidents for the dockers and for English labor in general, one may say with equal confidence that, if this minor dispute on the South-West India Docks in August 1889 had not set in train these particular events, some similar concatenation of circumstances would have unloosed the flood of the new unionism.

The outbreak of the new unionism in the dockers' strike was the focus and culmination of trends which had been gathering strength for several decades:

1. At the very time when the old trade-union leaders were consolidating their position in terms of *laissez-faire*, industrialists were being forced to abandon *laissez-faire* and to put in its place the Railroad Ring, the Salt Union, employers' associations,\* and various other forms of industrial integration. The dock companies themselves furnished a vivid illustration of the impossibility of 'free competition' according to orthodox rules in the state of industrial development England had reached. Tightening competition at home and overseas and a falling rate of profit signalized the decline of England's comfortable and splendid commercial supremacy. In the thirty years preceding 1886, London docks had been vastly extended, and, despite amalgamations, there were in 1886 still four distinct dock companies engaged in a race for the patronage of the big ships. So keenly was competition felt among these four companies that it became impossible for them to tolerate *laissez-faire* among themselves; '. . . when years of ruinous rivalry between the docks and wharves, and between dock and dock, for the lion's share of shrinking trade had reduced profits to zero point, a vigorous effort was

\* See Ch. II, pp. 38-44.

made [at the end of 1888] to check the suicidal competition by amalgamating the two most powerful companies.' <sup>78</sup> There was competition not only among dock owners but between shipowners and dock owners, because the latter charged shipping companies heavy prices for handling cargoes, and then proved themselves such inefficient middlemen that they lost the means of doing the work. So apparent had the ruinous effects of unplanned competition become that the *Annual Register* stated in its report of the strike: 'The eyes of the public were opened to the reckless extravagance, with which dock accommodation had been extended without regard to the requirements of trade . . . ' <sup>79</sup>

2. The new unionism was, further, an outcome of the effort to maintain competition and to make sure of profit by keeping the wages of the lowest groups of unorganized workers at a minimum, exploiting to the full an 'easy market' of surplus labor. Match girls, gas workers, dockers all represented the lowest-paid unskilled workers. In regard to the docks the *Annual Register* followed its accusation of 'reckless extravagance' by the statement: 'The only chance of making a return to the shareholders was by keeping down the cost of labour to the lowest level.' <sup>80</sup> The dock laborers, desperately fighting daily for jobs, sometimes waiting a week for a 'call' and meanwhile living on 'the furtive storing of refuse rice thrown away by coolies,' <sup>81</sup> were at the core of the 30 per cent of London's population below the subsistence level. Ben Tillett, himself a 'dock rat' who had spent his strength in the apparently hopeless task of organizing unskilled workers, said of this unlikely human material: 'So real was the stigma attaching to dock labour that those of us who earned a living by it concealed the nature of our occupation from our family as well as our friends.' <sup>82</sup>

The men struck for a uniform rate of 6*d.* an hour, and 8*d.* for overtime, a minimum of four hours' work at a time, and the abolition of contract work. This would have amounted to a minimum of 2*s.* a day for those getting jobs; and they did not ask for even a weekly minimum. During the negotiations with the directors, which occurred only after all

the docks were tied up and the men had been out for a week, there was haggling over the four-hour minimum, and, after that was granted, haggling over the 6*d.* an hour. Finally, after the strike had lasted nearly five weeks, terms were agreed upon through a mediating committee which included Cardinal Manning and Sidney Buxton. Practically all the workers' demands were conceded except an immediate beginning of the new rate of pay.

3. The new unionism was a gigantic protest against the policies of the old leaders and a demand for wider participation and greater democracy within the labor movement. Protest against the sliding wage scale advocated by the union bureaucracy was revived at intervals during the late 'seventies and 'eighties; in 1888 the Miners' Federation of Britain was formed, including only those districts which had thrown off the sliding scale; by 1893 it had grown to 200,000 members.

The early 'seventies had seen some organization of semi-skilled workers. In 1881 this movement was renewed when the woolen industry, hitherto almost unorganized, created the General Union of Textile Workers including the semi-skilled. By 1887 nearly all the unions in the cotton trades had joined in the United Textile Factory Workers Association.

The rebel strike for a nine-hour day in the engineering trades in 1871 had shown that it was possible to work successfully independently of established leaders. Movements for a more radical policy continued, and in 1887 the Northumberland miners went on record in favor of a legal eight-hour day and passed a vote of confidence in their Parliamentary Committee and in their Liberal-Labour M.P.'s, Charles Fenwick and Thomas Burt.

The dockers' strike signalized the fact that these minority rebel groups had found new leaders and had widened to include unskilled as well as semi-skilled labor. John Burns and Tom Mann were rebels in the Engineers' Union; but Will Thorne was a gas worker, Tillett a docker. Without these new leaders from among the workers the strike could not

have been won. Tom Mann had 'the genius of sheer energy. His tremendous capacity for the work he enjoys the most became a mighty factor in the supreme success of the Dock Strike.' <sup>83</sup> Although John Burns had earlier 'dismissed with flippancy the possibility of forming a Dockers' Union' his dramatic oratory and enthusiasm, once the strike was on, were of incalculable importance. <sup>84</sup> When it is considered that a strike of from 40,000 to 50,000 men, with 50,000 more indirectly involved, employing 16,000 pickets at a time, <sup>85</sup> with the problem of feeding the men and their families, was organized by a group having at the outset about 7s.6d. in the treasury, <sup>86</sup> the crucial importance of the work of these men will not be lightly dismissed.

But the strike represented far more than the work of these leaders. The fact that for the first time since 1797 the Port of London was closed was not an achievement of a few individuals. The men no longer had to be urged on by Tillet and the others; they drove their leaders. Tillet was criticized for giving the directors such short notice of the strike, but it was with the greatest difficulty that he persuaded the men to go to work at all on the day that the strike notice was sent, and he could not induce them to remain at the docks after four. <sup>87</sup> Starting from the little 'Tea-porters' and General Labourers' Union founded by Tillet two years before, unionism among the dockers spread rapidly with the cry, 'Trade Unionism for All.' A new stratum of labor discovered that it had to and could help itself. The isolated protests and rebellions of the early 'seventies had become a general movement.

4. Although itself conducted with all the moderation which had marked the trade unionism of the 'sixties, the dockers' strike nevertheless embodied a new awareness that British workers could use violence. England is often described as the country of moderation where change occurs without revolution. But, as one recalls the part that threats and violence played in the passing of the Reform Bill of '32, the Peterloo Massacre, the lockouts and transportations which destroyed the Grand National Consolidated Trades

Union and the Society of Agricultural Labourers in the 'thirties, and the violent suppression of Chartism, one wonders whether these 'exceptions' are not too easily explained away out of deference to the moderation theory. Lord Randolph Churchill stated that when 'the people' are in earnest they show their sincerity by pulling down Hyde Park railings and breaking club windows.<sup>88</sup>

In the docile 'sixties such outbreaks faded into remote memories of the turbulent 'thirties and 'forties. But with the 'great depression' this 'earnestness' reappeared in full force and augmented. The Irish conflict was marked by the Phoenix Park murders and threats and acts of 'violence' from the Parnellites and the Land League. As early as 1880 protest meetings of the unemployed in England reached unprecedented numbers and vehemence; in 1884, at the time of the agitation over the franchise, the London Trades Council held a meeting of 80,000 in Hyde Park supporting the action of the government, and 'the greatest Reform Demonstration ever held,' of over 120,000, protested the threatened veto of the House of Lords and 'gave us the Representation of the People and Redistribution of Seats Acts.'<sup>89</sup>

In 1885 a demonstration of the Social Democratic Federation in Hyde Park was suppressed by the police, and the demonstrators replied by smashing windows in Pall Mall. Four men, John Burns, Hyndman, H. H. Champion, and J. E. Williams, were arrested and brought to trial. Later all four were acquitted. This not only gave a great impetus to workers' activity, but 'led to the immediate opening of a Mansion House Fund to relieve the unemployed, and substantial funds were quickly subscribed. The effect upon business people . . . was very noticeable, and for awhile, whenever the unemployed were about to march in any direction, the utmost concern and caution were manifested.'<sup>90</sup>

The following year the Federation determined to hold a demonstration demanding justice to Ireland in Trafalgar Square in defiance of police prohibition. A battle ensued, giving the occasion the name 'Bloody Sunday' and John Burns and Cunninghame Graham were sentenced to six



weeks' imprisonment. 'Bloody Sunday . . . resulted immediately in the establishment of the first organization uniting on a common platform Radical and Socialist workers—the Law and Liberty League.' This 'united front' committee was composed of representatives from clubs affiliated with the Metropolitan Radical Federation, the Social Democratic Federation, Socialist League, and Fabian Society, with the aim of assisting anyone 'unjustly assailed by the police.'<sup>81</sup> Violence and counter-violence continued. In 1888 a workman named Linnell was killed by the police. A great funeral procession was held by the Socialists, and Morris wrote his death-chant:

Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,  
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

Violent agitation and violent suppression in the 'eighties continued as sporadic episodes. But the middle and upper classes, huddling behind the Channel and the reputed stability of English labor, none the less had intermittent night terrors of revolution. It needed but a protest gathering of 80,000 in Hyde Park or the smashing of windows in Pall Mall to start these giant shadows leaping athwart the consciousness of respectable Englishmen. Awareness of the possibility of 'violence' was just below the surface in the minds of the dockers and of the public when revolt broke out on the docks.

5. The dockers' strike signaled a new kind of alliance between labor and certain sections of the middle class. The two hundred or more Radical workingmen's clubs in London, which, in the late 'eighties had a membership of 25,000,<sup>82</sup> and 'directly controlled at least one-fifth of the Liberal votes of the Metropolis'<sup>83</sup> had been largely initiated by middle-class leadership and financial support during the preceding twenty years. The first of these Radical clubs, combining social and political interests, was founded by one of the editors of *The Beehive* in the late 'sixties. One of the most famous, the Eleusis Society of Chelsea financed by Sir Charles Dilke, was politically influential through a series of

pamphlets, of which the first was entitled *To Hell with Trade Unionism*. By the time of the dock strike there were nearly 400 clubs in the Workingmen's Club and Institute Union throughout England with a total membership of about 100,000.\*

These clubs, even when they became working class in leadership and support as well as in membership, were a phase of the Liberal-Labour Alliance. With the 'eighties came a new middle-class movement which influenced labor in the direction of socialism rather than liberalism. Even the dissident workers within the old unions were largely concerned with *ad hoc* protests; like the old leaders they had no general program or principles of reform. Such a program, giving expression to the aspirations of labor, was provided by certain middle-class groups. The Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society gave the workers formulated ways of expressing the things they felt. The Social Democratic Federation, largely working class in membership, trained leaders of the new unionism and of the Independent Labour Party.†

To statements of protest the Social Democratic Federation added revolutionary slogans and the Fabian Society substantial facts on which to base a new program. Public education and the adult-education movement enabled workers to listen to lectures and to read pamphlets and papers. A number of

\* Robert Archey Woods, *English Social Movements*, New York, Scribner's, 1891, p. 56. Nearly all of these clubs were incorporated under the Friendly Societies Act. Their operation is illustrated by an account in *Reynolds' Newspaper* during the discussion on Home Rule.

† Not since the Saturday night of the second week in March, 1880 [announcement of Beaconsfield's dissolution] has there been at the working men's clubs and association houses of the metropolis . . . so large an amount of interest in a political crisis as . . . yesterday . . . The clubs began to be filled with members shortly after 2 o'clock, many of them foregoing their usual Saturday's dinner, and thereafter until dusk there was a constant flow of hard-working men . . . into those homely-furnished and quietly-circumstanced rendezvous in which . . . questions are debated with as keen . . . zest as that with which they are discussed in the great political clubs of the West-end . . . (14 June 1885.)

† Godfrey Elton, *'England, Arise!'* London, Jonathan Cape, 1931, p. 99.

such sheets were published in the 'eighties and helped to focus labor opinion. *The Beehive* was dead, but *Justice*, the organ of the Social Democratic Federation, *The Labour Elector*, published privately by H. H. Champion of the Fabian Society, *The Commonwealth* of the Socialist League, *The Link*, published for a few years by Annie Besant, another Fabian, *The Star*, another Fabian product, *Truth*, published by Labouchere, *The Workman's Times*, edited by Joseph Burgess, in addition to *Reynolds' Newspaper* and other smaller sheets—all served to formulate working-class dissent.

Of the early and mid 'eighties Tillett wrote:

No public man in that period would condescend to take part in a Sunday meeting of casual workers and disdained to lower his pride in competing with the gutter oratory of the Salvation Army. We who organized the casual workers were left, in the first stages of our task, severely alone \*

During the late 'eighties a totally different situation existed. Workers were members of middle-class socialist organizations, read middle-class pamphlets and went to middle-class meetings; members of the Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society attended workers' meetings, supported, if they did not initiate, strikes of the match girls and gas workers, and helped in the organization of the unskilled.

Furthermore, even in the years immediately preceding the dock strike there was preparing a different kind of political participation of labor than the old Liberal-Labour Alliance, and this came to fruition immediately afterward.

"The whole "Labour movement" received during 1889 an immense impetus from . . . the successful intervention of the Working Men's Clubs and Trades' Unions in the London School Board and County Council Elections . . . [and from] the decision of both these bodies not to allow any of

\* Tillett, op. cit. p. 92. Tillett adds, as indicative of the attitude of the old trade-union leaders, that 'George Howell had made it an invariable rule of his life to rest on Sunday, and wrote explaining that he could not attend our meeting.' (Ibid. p. 100)

their work to be executed by firms not paying the standard wages.' \*

6. The change in the attitude of 'the public' toward labor and the demands of labor was not confined to a small group of middle-class intellectuals. 'The Poor' had become 'Labor' and 'Labor' with the vote had become 'The People.' Eruptions of violence during the decade suggested that the continued 'docility' of labor was not to be counted on. While the depression lasted, rebellion could be crushed. Returning prosperity meant more power for labor. The dock strike was in a very real sense a prosperity strike. It would not have been possible in the trough of the depression. At the same time Booth's study, just published, and the Report of the Royal Commission on Sweating substantiated the claims of labor by incontrovertible facts which could not escape attention. Vigorous support of the dockers' strike on the part of a number of young free-lance journalists and religious leaders of Toynbee Hall and elsewhere was both an indication of public sympathy and an important factor in extending it.

The contemporary chroniclers of the strike wrote:

The dock strike would have been impossible two or three years ago . . . The difference between John Burns of Trafalgar Square and John Burns of Tower Hill, between the circumstances which led to the Mansion House Fund and those which gave rise to the Mansion House Committee of Conciliation, is at bottom a difference between times of declining and reviving trade.

. . . if we go back only five or six years, we find the same complaints, the same grievances, the same crush at the dock gates, the same vague but deeply-rooted idea in the mind of the casual that he is being cheated at every turn, he knows not by whom. The only difference between then and now is a difference of power and opportunity to resist.<sup>24</sup>

\* Webb, *Socialism in England* (English edition), pp. 48-9. Of the work of labor in the London County Council Tillett wrote 'Our first Labour Group in the Council created our first Works' Committee, with scheduled wages and prices, and commenced the first of the municipal and industrial organisations fighting the combines and rings which were profiteering and helping to corrupt every form of municipal government.' (*Memories and Reflections*, p. 168.)

The *Annual Register* noted that 'for quite the first time the sympathy of the middle-classes at home, and even in the Colonies, was with the men and against the masters.'<sup>95</sup> The fact that in addition to the £30,000 received from Australia, £49,000 was raised by public subscription in England for the strikers and that it was the power of the press and public pressure that eventually caused the dock companies to yield is eloquent testimony to the state of popular feeling.

Victorian piety had tended to equate itself with the splendors of Britain's material advances. The two were easily linked together in reciprocal causality—in fact, the British system was comprised of individual enterprise, material superiority, and moral superiority and it was easy to feel that the whole complex stood or fell together. Meanwhile the habits of work and orderly self-denial on which middle-class life was built stored up in the average respectable Englishman a capacity for moral assertion, even moral indignation. He was trying to live right and obey the rules and do his part, and he was affronted when he ran across the other fellow skimping his duty. The same unyielding justice and moral indignation which had built harshness into the English Poor Law could lash out against the obtuseness of dock owners as a disturbing factor in the orderly progress of England. It was this fund of pious moral indignation that exploded when, in the case of the match girls, or the dockers, 'sweated' workers, or Booth's '30 per cent of London,' it was revealed that some wealthy members of the British community were making great profits out of conditions that constituted a shame to England. The strikes of the lowest groups of labor forced these problems out of the province of settlement workers and made them overflow into the decent neighborhoods of England. Middle-class people can exhibit an amazing capacity to ignore anti-social conditions, but once they are forced to look at them, they can flare into emphatic protest. The 'condition of England' in the 'eighties was dramatized in the situation of two of the most hopeless types of unskilled labor, women match workers and the riff-raff of casual workers on the docks. Middle-class moral guilt

and indignation could be—and were—released in their behalf in a flood of pity and support that would have been lacking for less underprivileged groups. These workers constituted a continuous latent reproach to middle-class respectability, and were a potent means of challenging and altering middle-class philosophy.

The five years following the dockers' strike saw the emergence of the 'New Unionism' as a unified and powerful movement, the birth of the Independent Labour Party, and new formulations of the aims of labor. The dockers' victory had tremendous effect because, of all groups of labor, dockers were the most despised and hopeless. If *those* workers could organize and win, then any unorganized group in England could. In a very real sense the dockers' victory proclaimed to all kinds of semi-skilled and unskilled industrial workers—the vast majority in industrial society—'If *we* can, *you* can.' The cry over England, 'Unionism for all,' took on hopeful meaning.

Two years after its formation, the Dockers' Union had grown from the tiny, fluctuating union of 1888 with 7s. 6d. in the treasury to a powerful organization with a membership of 25,000 in London and 35,000 more scattered throughout the United Kingdom, a yearly income of £140,000, and a monthly paper going to nearly 30,000. Through conducting more than 200 strikes in two years it had gained for its members an average of 5s. additional weekly wages.<sup>96</sup> In addition, in 1892 the South Side Labour Protection League, founded in 1889 after the dockers' strike, numbered 2,500 'waterside and general labourers' as members.\*

As if waiting for a signal, organization of other groups followed that of the dockers. Within a year of the dockers' victory, 200,000 workers formerly regarded as incapable of organization were added to the trade unions. The General Railway Workers' Union, originally established as a rival to

\* Testimony of H. Quelch, before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 16 June 1893, *Minutes of Evidence, Third Report*, Vol. XXXII, 1893, p. 215.

the aristocratic Amalgamated Society of Railway Workers, took in large numbers of general workers; in 1890 the chocolate makers, following the example of the match girls, conducted a successful strike; the Gas-workers' Union enrolled tens of thousands of labourers; the National Union of Agricultural Workers, which had shrunk to a few thousand, suddenly rose in 1890 to over 14,000; the National Amalgamated Sailors' and Firemen's Union, established in 1887, numbered 65,000 members two years later.<sup>97</sup>

The old unions caught the fever of the new activity and their membership increased rapidly; insurgent groups within them had a sudden access of strength. The *Annual Register* had pointed out at the time of the dock strike that 'For almost . . . the first time the representatives of the skilled workmen showed a readiness to throw in their lot with, and to support, unskilled labour in its struggle with the employers . . .'<sup>98</sup> Mann and Tillett wrote of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers of which the former was a member:

We could, if need be, call together hundreds among the most valued members of the Amalgamated Engineers in the Metropolitan districts who would readily testify to the most frightful apathy prevailing in their union even five years ago, but we are exceedingly pleased to be able to state that considerable activity is now being shown with very good results, and during 1889, 9,000 members were added to the roll of that Society.<sup>99</sup>

In 1889 the Bricklayers and the Railway Servants more than doubled their membership; the Boot and Shoe Operatives rose from 12,000 to over 17,000 in 1891. The Carpenters, the Engineers, and Shipbuilders—in fact, every union—experienced an inrush of new members. It was this new vitality which brought the doubling of trade-union membership between 1888 and 1892 and the new total of over a million and a half members.

The aristocracy of labor fought back, as appears from the testimony of their leaders before the Royal Commission in

1892.\* The long battle on policy in the Trade Union Congress continued. But the issue now swung to the other side. In 1889 the 'new' unionists were strong, and in 1890 they carried the day. A motion that Parliament be asked to fix a legal eight-hour day or forty-eight-hour week was for the first time carried by the Congress. This, lamented the *Annual Register*, showed the marked socialistic leanings of Burns and Mann and the other London delegates.<sup>100</sup> Broadhurst was repudiated by his own union and resigned the secretaryship of the Parliamentary Committee. Of the 60 resolutions passed by the Congress, 45 were sponsored by the 'Socialists,' 'being,' according to Burns, 'nothing more nor less than direct appeals to the State and municipalities of this country to do for the workman what trade unionism "old" and "new," has proved itself incapable of doing.'<sup>101</sup>

Certain differences between the old trade unionism and this new unionism, which was organizing the unskilled, bringing new vitality to established unions, and upsetting the detachment of the Trade Union Congress, lie on the surface, easy to observe. A narrow exclusive craft unionism was replaced by industrial organization including unskilled workers. Sick and funeral benefits were left to 'insurance societies' and the funds of the new unions were used 'for trade purposes only.' In 1890 the newly formed General Railway Workers' Union adopted a resolution that 'The Union shall remain a fighting one, and shall not be encumbered with any sick or accident fund.'<sup>102</sup> Mann and Tillett wrote:

\* See pp. 258-68 above. Mann and Tillett wrote of the attitude of the old leaders toward the new trade unionism: 'Not only was the utmost indifference shown, but immediately after the settlement of the great strike in an interview with an *Evening News and Post* reporter, we find Mr. Shipton using the most contemptuous phrases that a man could utter respecting some of the unions that were courageously struggling against enormous odds, repeatedly speaking of them as "mushroom" societies likely to die an early death . . .

'The fact is, the older section represented by Mr. Shipton has no real desire to see trade unionism become the all-powerful instrument for abolishing poverty . . . ' (Tom Mann and Ben Tillett, *The 'New' Trades Unionism*, London, Green and McAllen, 1890, pp. 11-12.)



. . . our experience has taught us that many of the older unions are very reluctant to engage in a labour struggle, no matter how great the necessity, because they are hemmed in by sick and funeral claims, so that to a large extent they have lost their true characteristic of being fighting organisations, and the sooner they revert to their original programme the better for the well-being of the working masses.<sup>103</sup>

A specific union action was no longer judged by whether it would promote 'understanding' with employers and avoid strikes. Improvement of the condition of workers was the main thing—to be secured peacefully, if possible, but by strikes if necessary.

These definite changes were, however, secondary to the fact that the new unionism brought a different orientation to labor. For a time, at least, labor was less content with the position of audience at periodic public shows—jubilees, parades, upper-class pageantry. Public concerns, municipal budgets, and empire relations, School Board elections and Cabinet changes, were labor's concerns; and labor demanded not only a vote but a voice in them. Workers were beginning to feel that they had an independent part in the industrial and political life of the nation. If British capitalism was still a co-operative venture it was a co-operative venture which included fights for a division of the profit and included labor as a fighting force. Acceptance of co-operation with employers had for the time being disappeared. Co-operation within labor's ranks increased.

In its definition of problems and policy labor was assuming initiative. The old unionists had been content with the definition of problems of the Royal Commission on Labour:

It should be understood that we do not intend . . . to undertake an examination of the fundamental causes of wealth and poverty, or to discuss the remedies by which evils and misfortunes, not directly connected with or bearing upon industrial disputes can be met. Thus we have felt it to be our duty to examine proposals . . . for obviating the clash of industrial interests . . . [within] the ordinary course of industry . . .<sup>104</sup>

Over against this was the policy of the new unionists:

The real difference between the 'new' and the 'old' is, that those who belong to the latter . . . do so because they do not recognise, as we do, that it is the work of the trade unionist to stamp out poverty from the land . . . Our ideal is a CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH.<sup>105</sup>

[The aim of the old unions is] defensive and palliative; it refuses to recognize Class War, which is inevitable . . .

When even at the best of times . . . 80% of the wage-earners are receiving an average of 5s. per week less than is estimated as capable of supporting life decently at all . . . the battle cry of the future must be not Liberalism against Toryism, but Labourism against Capitalism . . .

New Unionists have finally accepted the doctrine of 'self-help,' and in the near future they will no longer require the guidance of their friend the enemy in selecting the particular agencies through which they *will* help themselves.<sup>106</sup>

Such a shift in the philosophy of labor inevitably meant a changed attitude toward political action as 'appropriate' for trade unions. The endorsement of an eight-hour law at the 1890 Trade Union Congress is only one indication of the growing conviction that appropriate trade union action might be through Parliament, coupled with a conviction that it would not and could not come through Tories or Liberals. A growing body of workers refused to be bought off by fair promises.

Agitation for a Labour Party had been gathering strength throughout the 'eighties. As early as 1881 *Reynolds' Newspaper* had pointed out the implications of its disappointment in the Gladstone Government:

The force which the Government displayed on coming into office seems to have degenerated into funk and feebleness . . .

Nowhere [is the weakness] more apparent than in the labour question of the day . . .

I may be accused of going against party. But party . . . in England is exploded so far as the working classes are concerned. We have been tricked, cozened, and lied to both by the Liberal

leaders and Tory chiefs. It now comes home to us that we must form a party ourselves, the party of labour.\*

In 1885 Michael Davitt had written

By this means the constituencies might be educated up to the level of combination to return a Labour Party fifty or sixty strong to the House of Commons . . .<sup>107</sup>

Talk of a Labour Party continued among the agitators who each year tried to bring the Trades Union Congress to more forthright action. In 1887 Kier Hardie moved what amounted to a vote of censorship against Broadhurst for voting against the Miners' Eight Hour Bill in Parliament and supporting capitalist candidates at elections; he also objected to workingmen's 'stumping the country' to catch votes for either of the great parties. Hardie's motion was lost by 80 to 15.<sup>108</sup> At the Congress of 1888 Hardie's group sought to win union support for a party of labor, but without result. In June of that year H. H. Champion, a leader in the Social Democratic Federation, had founded and financed a journal urging independent political action on the part of labor, *The Labour Elector*. This journal, described by John Burns as 'the best labour paper ever published in England,' and by the Webbs as unfortunately concentrating on 'a scurrilous attack upon the personal character and conduct of . . . [the leaders] of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C.,'<sup>109</sup> was devoted to exposing the alliances of labor representatives in Parliament with big business and to urging the formation of a labor party.†

In the meantime, before a Labour Party in England had actually been formed, a Scottish Labour Party was started in 1889 under the leadership of Kier Hardie. He had 'put his principle into practice [in 1888] by contesting Mid-Lanark as an Independent Labour candidate in opposition to both Liberal and Tory. The contest aroused fierce discus-

\* 30 January 1881. See, also, Ch. VI, pp. 230-32.

† See for example, *Labour Elector*, August and September 1888. This journal began as a monthly, and after about six months changed to a weekly. It was published for about two years.

sion throughout the country. It was not a fight on rival programmes, but on the claim of Labour to independent representation.' <sup>110</sup> For the first time there was an Independent Labour candidate in British politics. In appealing to the people Hardie submitted an analysis of all the interests represented in Parliament, showing that out of the seventy-two members sent from Scotland, not one represented the workers. Hardie was not yet an avowed socialist but his election speeches rang with socialist feeling. Their analysis of social ills was a socialist analysis:

Why is it that in the richest nation in the world those who produce the wealth should alone be poor? What help can you expect from those who believe they can only be kept rich in proportion as you are kept poor?

'Few save the poor feel for the poor, the rich know not how hard

It is to be of needful food and needful rest debarred.'

I ask you therefore to return to Parliament a man of yourselves, who being poor, can feel for the poor, and whose whole interest lies in the direction of securing for you a better and a happier lot. <sup>111</sup>

Hardie was defeated, but at the beginning of 1889 the Scottish Labour Party was formed as a direct result of this contest. Similar local movements came into being in different parts of England. These independent labor movements both fed and were fed by the new unionism. The new unions, the 'mixed bands of free lances,' <sup>112</sup> whom Broadhurst had scorned, gained control of the Trade Union Congress and, after 1890, pressed their demands further. In 1891 the London Trades Council formed a Labour Representation Committee avowedly to work for an independent party in Parliament.

During the early 'nineties England was flooded with socialist and near-socialist publications urging a Labour Party. The *Labour Elector* had ceased publication in 1890, but the *Workman's Times*, published by Joseph Burgess, begun in that year, helped to keep scattered independent

labor groups in contact. The following year Robert Blatchford began publication of *The Clarion*, which by 1894 had a weekly circulation of eighty thousand.\* It brought socialism to the people.

'Socialism . . . is not a system of economics. It is life for the dying people.'<sup>113</sup> These words of Kier Hardie's had animated the Scottish Labour Party. Bred in the mines from the age of seven, self-trained on Carlyle, Ruskin, Robert Burns, and Henry George, Kier Hardie had found the Kirk, the Temperance movement, Co-operation, and official Liberalism all inadequate. In the late 'eighties, as president of a Scottish Miners' Federation and editor of *The Miner*, later *The Labour Leader*, he was turning to socialism and to direct labor representation in Parliament. The two came to be united in his thinking: 'There is something even more desirable than the return of working men to Parliament, and that is to give working men a definite programme to fight for when they get there.'<sup>114</sup>

It was Kier Hardie who suggested the calling of the conference at Bradford in January 1893, which was to result in uniting various labor movements into a Labour Party. Practically all the local parties and a number of trade-union groups joined in the Independent Labour Party formed at this conference. The name Socialist Labour Party was rejected by a large majority of the 124 delegates, but the new Party adopted the socialist aim: 'To secure the collective ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange.' A proposed amendment, reminiscent in its moderation of the old 'Lib-Lab' alliance, 'To secure the separate representation and protection of Labour interests on public bodies,'<sup>115</sup> was lost. A new 'alliance' had come into being, an alliance which Hardie never ceased to work for: a political party socialist in principle based on the mass organization and economic power of the trade-union movement.

\* Elton, op. cit. pp. 194-5. The circulation of *The Clarion* increased by 10,000 a week after the publication of Blatchford's *Merrie England*, and carried socialism far beyond socialist circles.

The new unionism and the Independent Labour Party were signs that labor was living in a new climate of opinion. No longer were workers impotent applauders of middle-class prosperity and middle-class political parties, and fearful of 'state interference' or 'socialism' or whatever else might threaten the continuance of the middle-class economic system. No longer did they easily accept the interpretation of personal guilt—lack of hard work and thrift, lack of ability—as a reason for not getting ahead. They began to question and to blame the particular set of institutions under which they were living and to favor a positive program of some form of 'collectivism' rather than individualism. Their allies were no longer the middle class but other workers. They had no desire to fight their employers, but they now had the clear aim of eliminating poverty through struggle if necessary. They saw England as a country in which they claimed a share and they no longer easily rested their hopes on Progress, Prosperity, and Individual Effort.

This new philosophy was clearly voiced by many witnesses before the Royal Commission on Labour and by the Minority Report of even this Conservative Commission. In the statements of this radical minority the as-far-as-possible attitude no longer prevailed:

No matter what I may have to pledge myself to, I shall go the whole hog in facing this, that every citizen has a right to say, 'I want work, I do not want to live on charity; I do not want to go to the workhouse; I do not want to take anything from other people; I do not want to find myself lodged in gaol; but I do want a fair outlet for my energies.' I personally want that riveted upon the minds of the community.\*

We think it high time that the whole strength and influence of the collective organisation of the community should be deliberately, patiently, and persistently used to raise the standard of life of its weaker and most oppressed members . . .

In short, the whole force of democratic statesmanship must, in our opinion, henceforth be directed to the substitution, as far as

\*Testimony of Tom Mann before Group 'A' of the Royal Commission on Labour, 15 November 1892, *Minutes of Evidence*, Part 1, *Fourth Report*, Vol. xxxix, 1893, p. 187.

possible, of public for capitalist enterprise, and where this substitution is not yet practicable, to the strict and detailed regulation of all industrial operations, so as to secure to every worker the conditions of efficient citizenship.\*

In similar mood John Burns spoke in Old Bailey in 1888, when, after the Trafalgar Square riots, the authorities had finally yielded to the public demand for an open trial of Burns, Champion, Hyndman, and Williams:

Hating secrecy as I hate despotism, I don't want the poor to adopt in England . . . the continental method of removing grievances. Having opened the floodgates of education you cannot by putting the teachers of the people in prison wipe out their teaching and example. Is freedom of speech only to be allowed us where it is to be used for bolstering up either political party? Are we only to have the privilege of talking about things that do not materially improve our condition? Freedom of speech is to be ours so long as we do not know how to use it . . .

Now what is this Socialism of which so much is heard and feared? Socialism is a theory of society which advocates a more just, orderly, and harmonious arrangement of the social relations of mankind than that which now prevails. . . . Socialism proposes to abolish the system of wage slavery, and establish instead of [sic] governmental municipal co-operation, securing to every honest worker the full value of his labour . . . In fact, Liberal, Tory and Radical are only successful in their appeals to the people in so far as their programmes are socialistic in fact and tendency. And the suppression of Socialistic meetings by arbitrary power but intensifies the desire for the doctrines thereby aimed at . . .

Let us consider, your lordship, that arbitrary power has seldom or never been introduced into any country at once. It must be done by slow degrees, and as it were step by step lest the people should see its approach. The barriers and fences of the people's liberties must be plucked up one by one, . . . When these steps are allowed slavery and arbitrary power soon follow. The first political truth that is engraven on the soul of man is

\* Final [Minority] Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, Report by Mr. William Abraham, Mr. Michael Austin, Mr. James Mawdsley, and Mr. Tom Mann. Royal Commission on Labour, *Fifth and Final Report*, Part I, 1894, p. 146.

that all power flows from the people and is a trust for their benefit, and when trust is abused resistance is not only a right but a duty . . .

Let us all like men face the coming changes in society that are necessary and inevitable. By your verdict give the poor some hope of immediate redress and assist them in ventilating their grievances. Show the Government that the liberties of the people cannot be trampled upon with impunity, and as their guardians you resist their invasion by the police.<sup>118</sup>

The story of how the new force in labor spent itself, how the radical labor movement was blunted, and how it was once more embraced by liberal capitalism belongs to another book.



## VIII. *Religion*

THE changes in social philosophy which took place in late nineteenth-century England involved questions of the deepest human values which are the special concern of religion: \*

How free is man to determine his own destiny? What can be the range of his hopes? For what acts is he morally responsible?

In what can he put his trust? Are the underlying powers of the universe friendly to him, hostile, or indifferent? Should he rely upon reason, faith, or authority? Upon spiritual or material values?

What is the relation between seeking one's own happiness and the happiness of others? Between 'self-development' and 'sacrifice'? Between body and spirit?

Catholicism returned more single and unequivocal answers to these questions than did any other form of religion in England. Man is free only within definite limits set by God. But within those limits he can be secure. Cardinal Newman wrote:

From the time that I became a Catholic . . . I never have had one doubt . . . it was like coming into port after a rough sea; and my happiness on that score remains to this day, without interruption . . . Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt.<sup>1</sup>

Medieval Catholicism had offered man the possibility of assurance of his place in the spiritual universe and in human society.† Through nineteenth-century Catholicism he could

\* Cf. Ch. III, pp. 65-8; 109-12.

† Cf. Ch. I, pp. 10-12.

find security in God's love, in hope of a future life, and in something he could do—an appropriate procedure laid down by the Church—for everything which might befall him as an individual in this life. The Church taught him that the life of the spirit is its own proof and justification; it needs no validation through worldly activity. Spirit is more important than body. Faith in the authority of the Church is more important than reason. The soul of each individual man is more important than any particular social order.

For the Catholic Church it was true in the nineteenth century as in the twelfth that the specific acts of a man were significant, but he did not have any obligation to work out a plan for society. Economic interests were subordinate to the real business of life—salvation; economic activities were only one aspect of personal conduct and, like other activities, were governed by moral and spiritual values. It follows that problems involved in the elimination of poverty, or in education, in government, or human welfare, would always be secondary to the life of the spirit, and beliefs on these specific questions would be tested by their relation to the Church's version of the Kingdom of God.

There remains the question of the relation of the things of secondary importance to the things of primary importance. It is more important that a man be saved than that he be fed, but is it good that he be fed, or is hunger an aid to salvation? It is more important that he have faith than that he have knowledge, but is faith strengthened or threatened by knowledge? It is more important that he be a good churchman than that he be a good citizen, but does awareness of social questions have any bearing on his place in the Church? To such questions as these the leaders of the Catholic Church in England returned answers which made them ignore or defend certain social ills. They feared that trying to eliminate these evils would threaten their interpretation of spiritual values. Certain influential Catholics, notably Cardinal Manning, took the position that economic betterment was an aid to spiritual life, but they were isolated figures, unsupported by the main body of their Church.

The following summary by a Catholic scholar, although written later, states clearly the system of relative values which underlay the policy of the Catholic Church in England in the 'eighties:

Social questions present themselves to the Church's mind primarily in the form of error or sin, to be met and conquered by truth and virtue. Hence her first impulse to social reform directs her, not so much to social institutions as to correction of minds by true teaching and reforming hearts by instilling virtue. When, however, erroneous teaching distorts human relations and is incorporated into the customs, constitutions, and laws of a time; when injustice and oppression are due to these erroneous views, the Church will enter directly the field of reform to protect morality, justice, human dignity, and the family. . . . The Church is conservative in such effort . . . she is inclined to recognize an established order as sanctioned, since all ethical relations are expressed in its true terms . . . [she] is slow to advance against institutions as such . . . Patient acceptance of the limitations of life and of the inequalities of fortune is advocated though brave effort is encouraged to reduce these to the smallest possible limits.<sup>2</sup>

Since they no longer had to fight against legal disabilities and since at the same time they had no temporal vested interests to defend, the 1,300,000 Catholics of England and Wales could concentrate on carrying out the implications of their faith. What these implications were appears in the files of *The Tablet*, the weekly organ of the Catholic Church.

In the impoverished condition of masses of the population *The Tablet* saw an opportunity for the exercise of piety:

There are three kinds of character: utilitarian, philanthropic, Christian. [Christian character] reverences poverty as a more excellent state than wealth and sees something sacramental in the poor.

In the Middle Ages as matrimony had its chief bulwark in celibacy, so property had its chief bulwark in poverty.<sup>3</sup>

Religion alone supplies the arguments which could reconcile the masses to their lot.<sup>4</sup>

Civilization is built and depends upon inequalities. But . . . if, without frightening capital, . . . statesmen could see their way to better sharing of the wealth of the world . . . that part of the misery of our race which springs from want ought to be on the steady decline.<sup>5</sup>

The growth of capitalism claims freedom of investment . . . and freedom for the conditions of investment. Why then should it be shackled by the narrow selfish considerations which must influence the views of those who are paid for their labour. The capitalist seeks to get the quickest return for his expenditure on wares.

. . . The workman has directly the opposite interest of seeking the highest wage for his labour . . . our wise men have not yet discovered how to reconcile the conflicting interests . . .

. . . Socialism is a heresy . . . but like many heresies, it is an exaggeration . . . of the truth which has its origin in the wicked conduct, the obstinate perversity of men, who taking their stand on the letter of the law, violate its spirit with audacious shamelessness.<sup>6</sup>

[In Ireland] Catholics must interest themselves in the election of Poor Law Guardians lest having their material needs satisfied the Catholic Poor may drift from their faith.<sup>7</sup>

In discussing the Children's Protection Bill of 1889 (a bill providing that children selling, singing, or engaging in any public performance for profit at night should be placed under the care of their 'next friends' or 'other fit persons named by the Court'), *The Tablet* argued that Catholic children should not receive satisfaction of their material needs—homes—at the expense of their faith. It approved the Bill, but urged Catholics to make use of their political appointments to keep Catholic children in the faith under it.

Here is . . . a poor Catholic waif. He has been selling 'lights' in prohibited hours. An agent of a proselyting society has taken him to a 'Light Shelter' and thence to the 'Home.' His parents probably may never claim him. They are drunk or in prison . . . [or] The family are in utter destitution . . . Little wonder that almost every large Protestant orphanage in the land has its quota of 'Romanist' children.

We must organize to combat this enemy. We must have a Vigilant Society to organize and detect the proselytizer at his work. Either the Catholic Church in this country must be content to put up with this exasperating leakage . . . or we must tackle the evil, we must organize to face the labour and expense of organization.<sup>8</sup>

In regard to government, *The Tablet* affirmed that:

The Church is tied to no one form of civil polity . . . All she teaches is that the civil government is a divine ordinance and obedience to lawful rulers a Christian duty, and this teaching applies equally whether the form of government is monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy.<sup>9</sup>

The only possible way in which we Catholics in this country can act together is by resolutely excluding the subject of party politics. It . . . [has been] remarked . . . [that] the 'Britishers are the devil and all when they mix up their religion and their politics.' The remark applies with peculiar force to British Catholics . . .

. . . it is the bounden duty of British Catholics to take as large a share in . . . public and political life . . . as they possibly can. We want to see more Catholics in Parliament whether Tories . . . or Liberals . . . or Home Rulers . . .<sup>10</sup>

With 'revolution,' or 'socialism,' however, there can be 'no reconciliation':

. . . the Revolution does not respect her [the Church's] sacred rights. Catholicism is a system of spiritualism. The essence of Revolution is materialism . . . The Revolution has given neither equality, fraternity, or liberty to France—merely the privilege of being ruled by Radical adventurers.<sup>11</sup>

*The Tablet* condemned rebellions in Ireland or elsewhere, and insisted on obedience to duly constituted civil authority.

Changes in the educational system presented a direct challenge to the Church and its response was unhesitating.

*The Tablet* appealed 'not to physical science but to reason and conscience' in opposing state education and free schools as 'a flat violation of some of the most sacred of parental rights.' <sup>12</sup> It blamed the 'Board Schools' for much immorality

because of the neglect of religion, arguing that morality is not enough: 'When religion goes the foundation of all civilized society is a hempen rope.'<sup>13</sup> In 1884 it noted that *The Tablet* had been influential in securing the establishment of a Voluntary School Association to redress the wrongs of the Education Act,<sup>14</sup> and in 1886 the appointment of Cardinal Manning on the Royal Commission to inquire into the Education Act.<sup>15</sup>

*The Month*, a periodical with a somewhat wider appeal than *The Tablet*, confined its discussions during the first half of the 'eighties almost wholly to theological, historical, and literary questions. In the second half of the 'eighties it included some articles on unemployment, housing, and other social issues. *The Month* ventured criticism of some of the supposedly 'immutable laws of political economy,' but maintained that if we learn from political economy 'the futility of all schemes which would abolish poverty . . . and to fan the flame of Christian charity . . . then and only then can political economy be recommended . . .' <sup>16</sup> Like *The Tablet* it opposed free education, on the grounds that 'poor people suffer greatly by being forced to send their children to school,' that public education interferes with free religious teaching, and that 'education may lead to social unrest.'<sup>17</sup> The issue of public education was clearly stated some years later and the answer was never ambiguous:

If we are constrained to choose between sacrificing what is essential to the preservation of our children's faith or what will place them on an equality in point of secular education with the children of other faiths, we shall always prefer the latter alternative . . . But when once their faith is secure we desire for them every educational advantage . . . offered to others.<sup>18</sup>

The main effort of the Catholic Church in England was directed toward conquering individual sin by individual virtue rather than toward changing social conditions. As compared with the Church of England, the Roman Church had a clearer line of thought and action both positive and negative. It stood for more positive awareness of the social

implications of belief and at the same time more definite opposition to institutional reform. The fact that Catholics had been recently emancipated educationally and politically made them anxious to appear respectable on social issues and this mood coincided with the avowed spiritual emphasis of their faith. The fact that they were still, socially, a peripheral group in England meant that they were in a sense free to follow spiritual values and were not at the moment concerned with extending temporal power. McCarthy's comment on the appointment of Lord Ripon suggests the position of Roman Catholics in England.

It required some courage on the part of Mr. Gladstone to make Lord Ripon Viceroy of India. For Lord Ripon had lately committed an offence which in the minds at least of some influential Englishmen, was absolutely unpardonable: he had become a Roman Catholic. Some even of the Radical newspapers expressed a doubt as to whether a public man who had shown himself thus out of touch with the great majority of the English, Scottish, and Welsh people was the best who could be found for such a place as that of Indian Viceroy <sup>19</sup>

On questions which involved challenging the vested interests of the Established Church, the interests of Roman Catholicism lay more with the Nonconformists than with the Church of England. And yet, on such questions as control of education, the opposition of the Catholic Church to the Calvinism of the Nonconformists led them to support the claims of the Established Church.

One figure in the Roman Catholic Church stood out in striking contrast to the opposition to concern with social questions which characterized the Church in general. No leader of the period has aroused more controversy than Cardinal Archbishop Manning. Lord Bryce said of him:

[He had] no imaginative richness . . . [and] scant evidence of solid learning. [He] . . . never struck out a new or illuminating thought . . . What, then, was the secret of his great reputation and influence? It lay in his power of dealing with men . . . [He] had . . . a resolute will, captivating manners, and a tact equally

acute and vigilant . . . To call him an intriguer [would be] . . . unjust . . . But he had the talents which an intriguer needs.<sup>20</sup>

Whatever else Manning was or was not, he was a sign of the times—whatever his motives he realized that a person who was to be prominent in terms of emerging trends must realize the importance of labor and of some sort of co-operative social planning replacing unrestricted individual competition.

Even in the 'forties, then a clergyman of the Church of England, Manning had been an advocate of a living wage. 'But the Chartists went unchaplained, and by the time Christianity reached to the slum on the wings of Ritualism or Salvationism it was too late. The Manchester School had ground away Christian England. "Handlooms devour children," had cried the Rector of Lovington.'<sup>21</sup> In the 'seventies, now a priest of the Catholic Church, Manning supported Joseph Arch and the Agricultural Labour Union. In the 'eighties he welcomed Henry George and tried to prevent the placing of *Progress and Poverty* on the Index. He was directly influential in the publication of the *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII on Labor and Social Questions issued in 1891. Throughout the 'eighties he supported government provision for the unemployed, trade unions, and strikes for labor interests. In 1888, the Cardinal denounced as 'heartless and heedless' a statement in *The Times* that the only way to make more work for the unemployed was for the employed to produce as much profit as they could over the cost of producing. He affirmed that every man has a right to work or to bread.

At the testing time of the dock strike in 1889, when Archbishop Temple and the official Church of England turned a deaf ear to the dockers, Cardinal Manning was the most important single individual, outside the workers themselves, in bringing the strike to a successful issue. Tillet commented:

It was interesting to watch the combat of the Churches over the bodies of the Dockers. But the older man [Manning] was more human and subtle, his diplomacy that of the ages and the



Church. He chided the pomp of the Lord Mayor, the harshness of Temple, the pushfulness of Burns.<sup>22</sup>

At the Cardinal's funeral the greatest number of mourners were laboring men.

Cardinal Manning was as opposed as was the body of his Church and the Anglican Church to secular education, but he did not attempt to secure the repeal of the Act of 1870. To do this, he said, 'would be like proposing the repeal of the Gregorian Calendar. We cannot go back twelve days behind the rest of the world.'<sup>23</sup> The Act of 1870, he believed, was necessary, because the population had outgrown all existing means of education. But he protested vigorously against the administration of the Act which gave the control of education over 'to one class of schools . . . representing a form of [secular] opinion repugnant to the majority.'<sup>24</sup>

He condemned the social indifference of his fellow Catholics saying that, 'all the great works of Charity in England have had their beginning out of the Church.'<sup>25</sup> In his later years, 'in the isolation and loneliness which were closing in around him,' the Cardinal even looked wistfully toward his former Anglican associates, as seeming, from the point of view of his present discouragement, to have given more support to his interest in social problems. He complained of the apathy of English Catholics, and compared 'the rather meager support' he received from them with the enthusiastic co-operation of his fellow-Anglicans in former days when, 'I had only to lift up my hand and forty men sprang to my side to do my bidding.'<sup>26</sup>

The Anglican Church in its relation to changing philosophies presents a much more complicated picture than the Catholic Church in England. It was heir to the Catholic tradition that the good of man is to be found in the life of the spirit and that security and satisfaction for man lies in doing the will of God as interpreted to him by the Church. It was heir to Calvinism with its emphasis on individual

responsibility and on worldly activity as proof of salvation. It was the State Church of England. Unlike both Catholics and Nonconformists it had enormous vested interests in material prosperity and in established institutions.

Although as late as 1893 it claimed only 1,800,000 communicants and less than 2,500,000 children in Sunday School out of a population of 38,000,000, it was powerful out of all proportion to its numerical strength. It is true that, since 1828, Dissenters and, since 1858, Jews had been allowed to vote, to sit in Parliament, and to hold certain offices. Since 1859 the Anglican Church had been dis-established in Ireland; and since the middle of the century the compulsory levying of Church rates, the exclusive monopoly by the the Church of teaching at Oxford and Cambridge, the legal compulsion to employ an Anglican cleric at marriage and burial had been somewhat modified. But, as the 'Established' Church, the Anglican Church was still immensely influential.

Included within the Anglican Church were at least three separate lines of development, each with special influence on the interpretation of individual freedom and of social welfare: (1) A High Church movement stressing the political maintenance of the privileged position of the Anglican Church—hostile to Dissent, hostile to Catholicism, hostile to secular education, hostile to any form of radicalism, hostile to innovation from whatever source as a threat to its prerogatives. (2) A High Church movement stressing ecclesiasticism, the Church as a spiritual end in itself. At times this phase of Church activity embodied an effort to revitalize the spiritual life of the Church as in the Oxford Movement of the 'thirties and the Lux Mundi group of the 'eighties; at times it was concerned with the traditional forms of ritual and ceremony. (3) An Evangelical movement, Low Church or Broad Church, stressing help for human misery in human terms, rather than either the wealth and prestige or the spiritual life of the Church.

The concern of the Anglican Church for maintaining its

secular position meant that many Englishmen saw the Church only as a citadel of wealth and power.

*Reynolds' Newspaper* declared:

The State Church is one of those aristocratic and venerable institutions that must not be meddled with. To maintain it intact is one of the articles of the Tory creed. The parson stands on the same hallowed ground as the partridge and the pheasant.<sup>27</sup>

It is not easy to state the precise factual basis for the popular belief that the Anglican Church was first and foremost a worldly power. Two Dissenting Members of Parliament opened their discussion of Church properties with the flat statement:

There is nothing more difficult than to ascertain the extent and the value, of the various kinds of property applicable to the purposes of the English Establishment. The sources of information are so uncertain, the known facts and figures are so conflicting, and official refusals of adequate information so persistent, that the subject is involved in an obscurity which perplexes the most honest and painstaking inquirer.<sup>28</sup>

Estimates in the 'seventies of the capitalized value of Church properties—including estates and lands, tithes, income of two archbishops, twenty-eight bishops, and the lesser clergy, and special bequests—varied from £90,000,000<sup>29</sup> to £165,253,000.\* The annual revenues of the Church came from tithes, a form of taxation collectible by civil authorities, voluntary gifts to dioceses, parishes, and institutions, and from revenues from Church lands.<sup>30</sup> By the late nineteenth century this last item had been greatly increased by Church ownership of property in London and other cities, by royalties from mining property in the north of England, and by the ownership of hundreds of manors and estates with rights in any minerals under the commons.<sup>31</sup>

\* Arthur Arnold, M.P., 'The Business Aspect of Disestablishment,' *The Nineteenth Century*, April 1878. Quoted in Henry Richard and J. Carvell Williams, *Disestablishment*, London, Sonnenschein, 1886, p. 111. This figure is arrived at by deducting a special fund, known as Queen Anne's Bounty and properties in the hands of a board of Ecclesiastical Commissioners from Mr. Arnold's total of £183,503,050.

Out of these revenues the following salaries were established by statute for the greater bishops:

	<i>Per annum</i>
Archbishop of Canterbury .....	£15,000
Archbishop of York .....	10,000
Bishop of London .....	10,000
Bishop of Durham .....	8,000
Bishop of Winchester .....	6,500

while the average income of the remainder of the bishops was between £4,000 and £5,000.\*

The annual income of the Church of England was certainly not less than £5,000,000† and more probably approached £7,500,000. To the nearly 90 per cent of the nation not affiliated with the Church, it was clear, that in terms of the psychology of the market place the Church rendered no service commensurate with this expenditure.

*Reynolds' Newspaper* was only one voice of protest among many:

Thus we find thirty-two sleek, comfortable, well-to-do elderly gentlemen [the archbishops and bishops] sharing amongst them no less a sum than £162,000 per annum! <sup>82</sup>

Ministers of State may always rely upon the ministers of the gospel sanctioning . . . any line of policy the former may adopt, however unjust, cruel . . . and opposed to the doctrines . . . of Christianity it may be . . . <sup>83</sup>

Gladstone wrote:

\* The difference between statutory income and actual income the Ecclesiastical Commissioners could then put into their own Episcopal Fund to help out poorer bishoprics. Although the Church of England had no corporate existence as such (the only element which attempts to give cohesion in this respect is the Central Board of Finance organized in 1914), an Ecclesiastical-Commissioners Board was established by statute in 1836, made up of all the bishops, three deans, certain of the nobility and the bench, with other lay representation. This body deals with the sale, leasing, exchange, and general management of lands (Hon. Arthur Elliott, *The State and the Church*, London, Macmillan, 1882, pp. 103-7), serving as a sort of equalizing agent within the Church.

† The estimated amount of tithes for 1878 (Arthur Arnold, *op. cit.*).

The Church of England is much more likely of the two, to part with her faith than with her funds.<sup>84</sup>

John Morley declared that:

[The Anglican Church is] not the church of the nation but the church of a class, not the benign counsellor and helpful protectress of the poor, but the mean serving maid of the rich. She is as inveterate a foe to new social hope as we know her to be to a new scientific truth.<sup>85</sup>

The lordly incomes of the higher ecclesiastics led Catholics and Nonconformists to believe that 'an Anglican bishop cannot attain "sanctity."' Archbishop Benson was described in the Catholic *Month* as, like Wilberforce, having begun by serving the poor and ended by being a lordly prelate.<sup>86</sup>

Nor were these protests directed only against the higher clergy. The easy-going parsons who were described as 'squires who wore a white tie'<sup>87</sup> had in general a worse reputation for indifference to spiritual life than the bishops.

At the end of the decade Woods declared:

The curse of the Established Church is in its country clergy, who are, to a large extent, aristocratic in their feeling, and often exercise a petty despotism over their parishes, and in some of the incumbents of churches in the fashionable divisions of cities, whose main use seems to be that of adjuncts to polite society.<sup>88</sup>

The deference of the country clergy toward wealth regardless of doctrine appears in Beatrice Webb's account of her father's reading of the lessons in parish churches. She says:

. . . it was symptomatic of the general decline of orthodoxy that one who had been brought up as a Unitarian and never been admitted to the Anglican Church by the rite of confirmation, should have been not only accepted as a communicant by Anglican clergymen who knew the facts, but also habitually invited, as the wealthy layman of the congregation, to take an active part in the service.<sup>89</sup>

But wealth and association with wealth were not the only vested interests of the Church. Political leaders and members of the Anglican Church came from the same social group

and many of them had no social philosophy save what they had learned from the Church. As an English gentleman 'can only discuss religion with those with whom he is agreed, both toleration and the essential bigotry of minds which are closed have developed side by side.'<sup>40</sup> Moreover, with its clergy still largely in control of the recruiting grounds for Cabinet ministers at Oxford and Cambridge,\* and with elementary and secondary education almost completely under the domination of the Church until 1870, the Church was bound to seem to outsiders an instrument of oppression maintaining its material and political position at whatever expense to humanity.

An inevitable outcome of protests against this position of the Church was the movement for disestablishment. In 1884 Labouchere was writing 'No one can be so ignorant of Liberal feeling as to be unaware, that nine out of every ten would welcome disendowment and disestablishment.'<sup>41</sup> In 1831 at the time of the agitation for the First Reform Bill John Stuart Mill had written:

You may consider the fate of the Church as sealed . . . The [Church] hierarchy being . . . as a body hostile to [the Bill] while the temporal Peers were almost equally divided, the first brunt of public indignation has fallen upon the Prelacy. Every voice is raised against allowing them to continue in the House of Lords . . . I cannot say I regret either the approaching downfall of the Peers or that of the Church.<sup>42</sup>

In the two decades following the Reform Act agitation for disestablishment continued—as much the result of Chartism and the movement for reform of labor conditions as of religious opposition to the perquisites of a State Church. Except for burial rights the economic and social privileges of the Church were as much anathema to outcast labor as to outcast religious groups. After the collapse of Chartism the movement for disestablishment was continued through the 'fifties and 'sixties on purely religious grounds by the Anti-

\* See Ch. VI, pp. 195-7.

State Church Association, later the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control.

The greater activity of labor in the early 'seventies brought with it renewed demands for Church disestablishment, and the outcry against the Church was taken up by Chamberlain's Radicals demanding free schools. Chamberlain in espousing the Education Act of 1870 had prepared a program calling for 'Free Church, Free Schools, Free Land and Free Labour,' which the Established Church promptly attacked:

The political Nonconformists are hastening on to an open alliance with the Socialists . . . The true object of the movement is declared in the following sentence: 'The agitation for the secularization of Church endowments and for dethroning the Establishment as a great political engine for repressing the freest intellectual life and thought, and for opposing the manifestation and fulfilment of the popular will and aspirations, will supersede and include all the minor subjects' . . .<sup>43</sup>

Herbert Spencer, Morley, and Harrison, through the *Fortnightly Review* and the editor of the *Nonconformist* joined with Chamberlain in the Anti-State Church Movement.<sup>44</sup>

In 1876 the National Reform Union of Manchester, with 739 representatives of 173 Liberal organizations present, adopted a platform of 'religious equality' including disestablishment and disendowment. In 1880 George Shipton, secretary of the London Trades Council, advocated as a part of his program: 'Disestablishment and Disendowment of the English Church which would give about ten millions annually to provide a Free Education for the People.'<sup>45</sup> Of 652 members of the House of Commons elected in 1880, 176 were pledged to disestablishment.<sup>46</sup> But other concerns made the Church issue less central during this Gladstone Parliament, and by 1885 *The Illustrated London News* was speaking of Mr. Gladstone's advocacy of 'Dim and Distant Disestablishment.'<sup>47</sup> Like the Republican movement of the 'seventies the movement for disestablishment gave way to more direct attacks on social and economic issues.

A second trend in the Anglican Church was the Ecclesiasticism concerned with prescribed Church ritual as an expression of spiritual life. To many outsiders this made the Church appear not as antagonistic to human interests, but smugly remote from them—completely out of touch with the major concerns of mankind.

In July 1881, on the death of Dean Stanley of Westminster, *The Economist* wrote:

The late Dean of Westminster was so living a figure in England . . . that we are impelled to mention his death even in the *Economist* . . .

Dean Stanley's . . . popularity was due . . . to the fact that he, almost alone among the dignified ecclesiastics of the English Church, adequately represented . . . the modern spirit without ceasing to be an ecclesiastic. The defect of the English Establishment, as of the Roman Catholic Church . . . is that her best men seem to belong to another world, to talk an archaic dialect, to be moved by earlier impulses and older reasonings than those which govern the men of today. Her most prominent Bishops . . . lecture upon subjects no one is discussing, contend with sins not felt as living temptations, advise remedies everyone sees to be unpractical. Her best preachers send their voices everywhere except into the market place . . . Dean Stanley . . . discussed the rights of burial . . . like a statesman and not like a Rector. If he had to deal with . . . Dissenters he did it . . . as one who did not tolerate them as necessary but disagreeable works of God, but as a politician entirely opposed to the opposition, but aware that it had a right to exist and to be respected.<sup>48</sup>

The lives of other high ecclesiastics of the period emphasized the uniqueness of Dean Stanley. Dr. Pusey and Canon Lidden both declared that if the Creed were 'mutilated,' by the omission of any of its clauses, or 'degraded,' by being removed from the public service or being ordered to be used on fewer occasions in the year, or being made permissive, they would resign their positions in the Church. Dean Church of St. Paul's devoted his life to trying to reform the Church through spiritual revival, but his sermons on faith and hope show little awareness of social problems. He



preached that the kingdom of God is 'a living fact' but was vague as to what kind of a living fact; to him, being a servant of God was a distinct calling separate from other interests of life.<sup>49</sup> Archbishop Tait had even less interest in social reform and devoted his efforts to preventing change within his own Church rituals, he favored the legal proceedings against Bishop Colenso and supported the bill for prosecuting clergymen who used unusual ritual.

To most High Churchmen England was an area in which the Church could work to save souls or to increase its own strength rather than a human society beset with problems which it was the task of the Church to help to solve. Twenty years earlier when the authors of *Essays and Reviews*<sup>50</sup> pled for a more liberalized humanistic religion, its authors were denounced as the 'Seven against Christ'; powerful ecclesiastics used legal prosecution to maintain their official position, and Dr. Pusey wrote private letters to one of the judges to influence his decision.<sup>51</sup> The essayists were vindicated by the House of Lords, but a few years later similar High Church influences succeeded in having Bishop Colenso condemned by the ecclesiastical courts for a less supernatural more humanized interpretation of the Bible. Later the secular courts revised this decision, but Colenso lived a wretched life, cut by his old friends, and deserted by his servants, a warning to any who attempted to defy the definition of religion of the ecclesiastics in power.

In the early 'eighties the same spirit showed itself in interminable controversies, sometimes dragged out for years, over ritualistic practices, over imprisonment of clergymen for defiance of ecclesiastical courts, over the refusal of the use of Church bells at Nonconformist funerals.<sup>52</sup> In the middle of the decade Escott wrote:

Whereas formerly, the questions discussed in the Divinity Schools at Oxford were five: 'predestination, universal redemption, reprobation, irresistible grace, final perseverance,' the vexed points now are—incenses, lights, vestments, eastward position, wafer bread, mixed chalice.<sup>53</sup>

At the end of the decade the volume entitled *Lux Mundi*,<sup>54</sup> like the Tractarian movement of the 'thirties, marked an effort to restore spiritual vitality to the Church, and its reception showed the difficulties encountered in such an attempt. It was written under the editorship of Bishop Gore, Principal of Pusey House, Trinity College, Oxford, by a group of High Churchmen at Oxford. Its purpose was 'to attempt to put the Catholic \* faith into its right relation to modern intellectual and moral problems,'<sup>55</sup> and this purpose was immediately criticized by another group of churchmen who insisted that the purpose should have been stated the other way around.

The need for the reaffirmation of faith arose, the authors believed, from the fact that faith had been challenged—

. . . by new social needs, by strange developments of civilization, by hungers that it had not yet taken into account, by thirsts that it had not prepared itself to satisfy . . . by new scientific methods . . . by new worlds of facts.<sup>56</sup>

*Lux Mundi* considered Christian character in this new environment in the following relations:

To God—Christian Wisdom

To Men—Christian Justice

To Self—Christian Temperance      •

To the hindrances of environment—Christian Fortitude.<sup>57</sup>

The beliefs suggested by this Table of Contents—man in opposition to his environment, one attitude toward oneself and another toward one's fellows, life of the body in opposition to the life of the spirit, the subservience of the individual—are made more explicit in the chapters of the book:

The material body will become one perfectly subservient to, and expressive of, the free movements of a purified spirit.<sup>58</sup>

[Christianity must recognize the] one decisive fact of human nature, the fact of sin.<sup>59</sup>

\* That is Anglican Catholic.

Sacrifice is . . . the outward expression of . . . love [to God] . . . Submission, reverence, love are the original feelings which sacrifice was intended to represent; . . . with the intrusion of sin another element appears in sacrifice; and men attempt, by their offerings . . . To wipe out their guilt, to propitiate Divine wrath.<sup>60</sup>

On certain situations in society the Church is neutral:

[On the question] What is the best form of government . . . the Church is frankly opportunistic.<sup>61</sup>

Christianity is not pledged to uphold any form of property as such . . . Neither riches nor poverty make men better in themselves . . . Christianity urges that if there is private property, its true character as a trust shall be recognized, its rights respected and its attendant duties performed.<sup>62</sup>

Thus this group in the Anglican Church, like the Catholics, took no position on specific political or economic problems in society. The Church, in their view, has its own sphere and its own purposes which should influence society for good:

To spiritualize life without ceasing to be spiritual, to maintain a high morality while at the same time interpenetrating a non-Christian or very imperfectly Christianized society with its own moral habits and manners, is a task which presupposes great cohesion and tenacity on the part of the Christian Church . . .

It is especially necessary in a great industrial society such as that of modern England that the Christian law of self-sacrifice, which crosses and modifies the purely competitive tendency leading each individual to seek his own interest and that of his family, should be strongly . . . presented . . .

. . . a Christian mistrusts the extravagant schemes of some forms of Socialism . . . not because he is insensible to the wrongs and miseries which suggest a violent remedy, but because all such sweeping proposals would merge the individual life, would repress . . . the fulness of that . . . social life which gains . . . from the free play of individuality.<sup>63</sup>

Certainly this volume was no assertion of the claims of humanity against the claims of God. But as *Essays and Re-*

*views* thirty years earlier had been attacked as heretical, so *Lux Mundi* became a target for criticism from ritualists who denounced it as capitulating to secular trends. 'Liddon was distressed, and Archbishop Denison led an attack on the book in Convocation. Both these, and many more, were deeply pained, not merely by some of the things said in the book, but by its reliance on human reason.' <sup>64</sup>

Such controversies strengthened the conviction that Churchmen were concerned only with their own affairs, and that these were not the affairs of other men.

A third development in the Anglican Church, however, definitely involved the new forms of humanitarianism, the shaping of a social basis for individual development. This appeared in a scattering of persons or diminutive movements, which were discreetly frowned upon or actively banned by the official Church.

Innovators in such movements believed that 'The churches . . . are beginning to find out that their vitality depends upon their success in meeting certain social needs and aspirations common to all classes.' <sup>65</sup> They went so far as to say that the only chance of survival of the Church lay 'not in narrowing of reform from within but in widening of reform from without' <sup>66</sup> in a period when 'the Christian tradition . . . had grown thin and brittle, more easily broken than repaired.' <sup>67</sup>

The concern of the Church for human welfare was not new. If in the first half of the century there had been, even according to Churchmen, only 'a few isolated figures' among the clergy who had a 'Christian social conscience,' <sup>68</sup> this was no longer true after the founding of Christian Socialism by Kingsley and Maurice. They were both Anglican clergymen who had been influenced by Coleridge and Carlyle and who for the thirty years following the collapse of Chartism carried concern for the people to a widening group. <sup>69</sup> The founding of the first Workingmen's College, the publication of *Politics for the People*, *Tracts on Christian Socialism*, and other pamphlets, Kingsley's novels *Yeast* and *Alton Locke*, all represented not any distinctive economic or political

views but the single immense fact that a group of clergymen and laymen of the Established Church dared to call themselves Socialists. Christian Socialists worked actively in the Co-operative Movement and Friendly Societies, and in some cases became 'trusted legal advisers' for trade unions.<sup>70</sup>

In 1878 the founding of the Salvation Army, as an outgrowth of certain activities of the Methodist Church, called the attention of the churches to the masses of people whose material conditions of life made them deaf to the teachings of religion. Three years earlier Stewart D. Headlam, curate of Bethnal Green, had united Tractarian sacramentalism and Maurician Socialism in founding the Guild of St. Matthew. Its aim was, in Kingsley's phrase, 'to justify God to the people,'<sup>71</sup> 'to promote the study of Social and Political questions in the light of the Incarnation.' \* The Guild of St. Matthew grew out of the belief that the 'atheistic secularism' represented by Mr. Bradlaugh and the Hall of Science was the result of the 'secular work of Christ and His Church having been neglected by churchmen.'<sup>72</sup> The Guild carried on the work of Kingsley and Maurice. Always a small body with a membership of about one hundred clergymen and one hundred and fifty laymen, it nevertheless served to extend awareness of social problems among churchmen.

To Stewart Headlam interest in social reform was not a departure from the essential spiritual teachings of the Church but a realization of them. 'The best manual of Socialism is the Church Catechism'; 'The Church is bound by its nature to be communistic,' he wrote in *The Laws of Eternal Life*.<sup>73</sup> This book as well as the work of the Guild was addressed to the clergy, and, also, significantly to those 'social and political reformers who . . . are not claiming refreshment of the Church and conscious communion with Christ.'<sup>74</sup> Of the former he demanded:

\* One of the three officially stated objects of the Guild, found on fly-leaves of its pamphlets, e.g. in Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, *The Guild of St. Matthew, An Appeal to Churchmen*. London, Office of the Guild of St. Matthew, 1890.

I most seriously ask my brethren of the clergy . . . whether it is not to a very large degree their fault that so many men and women among the workers are alienated from the Church.<sup>75</sup>

Headlam never sheltered himself from criticism on social questions by dealing only in generalities. In 1885, then a member of the Fabian Society, he proposed the following questions to candidates for election:

Will you support (1) Free Education, (2) The rating of unoccupied land in towns, (3) An increase in the land tax, (4) The conferring on municipalities the power to rate the dwellings of the poor, (5) An eight-hours bill, (6) A bill shortening the hours in shops, (7) Increased power for municipalities to undertake industrial work for the purpose of relieving distress? <sup>76</sup>

The Guild was influential in welcoming Henry George to England, and it consistently called attention to social problems through its organ *The Church Reformer* and through lectures on Christian Socialism. In 1905 Headlam vigorously informed a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the disorders of the Church

. . . that the real disorders are social and industrial, and not ritual . . . The people are greatly to blame for allowing the great instrument of Social Progress, the Church, to be run in the interest of the idle monopolizing class.<sup>77</sup>

In 1906 the Guild organized a clerical address of congratulation to the thirty labor members of Parliament.

The social concern of the Guild involved no weakening in its assertion of spiritual life as interpreted by the Anglican Church. It advocated restoring the mass 'to its proper unique place in church worship'; <sup>78</sup> and protested the teaching of 'horrible "Calvinistic" doctrines,' including the Bible and excluding the Catechism in State Schools, thus 'endowing . . . the teaching of the average middle-class commercial conception of religion.' <sup>79</sup> But the unequivocal religious teachings of Stewart Headlam did not prevent his incurring the ban of the Bishop of London because of his secular activities and because of his 'promoting the Church and Stage

Guild, which on the one hand upholds the theatre and theatrical dancing and on the other endeavors to bring theatrical men and women under the influence of the Church.' <sup>80</sup>

To Canon Barnett of St. Jude's, England represented not only people to whom religious faith might be preached but people sorely beset by material troubles which the Church should help. He deplored the fact that the aristocracy of the Church of England was out of touch with the nation; he opposed disestablishment, but urged a more democratic Church. As a worker in the Charity Organisation Society he had held that 'the poor starve because of the alms they receive,' but he came to believe that there was a greater evil than unregulated charity—unregulated capitalism and landlordism. He was in the 'seventies one of the persons chiefly responsible for the Cross Housing Acts.\* At St. Jude's Church he created what Herbert Asquith later described as 'a research laboratory for social reformers.' <sup>81</sup>

Carrying out his motto, 'Fear not to sow because of the birds,' he founded Toynbee Hall in 1884 in memory of Arnold Toynbee, who had been one of the group working under him at St. Jude's. At the time of its fiftieth anniversary a commentator described Toynbee Hall as 'the prototype of all university settlements in the world today':

'Something must be done' was the universal comment on social conditions in this country in 1884 . . . But for the great majority of ordinary thinking men and women, 'Something must be done' was the limit of their attitude. Samuel Barnett, 'the pale clergyman from Whitechapel,' whom Clemenceau picked out as one of the three greatest men he met in England, told them what to do. His was the idea of a 'colony' of social workers, preferably university graduates, settling among the poor to try and bridge the chasm of class difference and to offer an opportunity for intellectual and material improvement. <sup>82</sup>

There had been an isolated settlement house in Manchester in 1877, but Toynbee Hall marked the real begin-

\* See Ch. iv, pp. 147-52; Cf. H. O. Barnett, *Canon Barnett: His Life, Work and Friends*, pp. 129 ff.

ning of the settlement movement. Oxford House, founded by Canon Scott Holland in the same year as Toynbee Hall, was more distinctively religious but marked by the same aim, 'to bring the educated classes face to face with the large mass of men and women in the East of London.' \* Like Stewart Headlam, Canon Barnett believed that active work for the material welfare of suffering men was carrying out, not turning away from, the spiritual life of the Church. This was clear in all his activities and in every statement he made about his work:

The people have simply ceased to find in the ordinary services [of Church ritual] an expression for their religious feelings . . .

Now stated most widely, a church exists to spiritualize life . . . A National Church exists to connect the life of individuals and the life of the nation with the life of God . . . In a democratic age, an aristocratic organization is not understood.

The Church of England is not therefore effective to spiritualize the life of the nation and develop honesty of living . . . As a 'reformed' Church, it offers the example of the greatest abuses. As a 'Catholic' Church, it promotes the principle of schism. As a 'National' Church, it is out of touch with the nation.<sup>83</sup>

The ministers of the Democratic Church may be near to God and near to men . . .

. . . There must be a parish parliament and not a parish despot, and the government of the Church must be by the people as well as for the people.

This is the first step, and what will follow is in God's counsels . . .<sup>84</sup>

Following this policy Canon Barnett was active not only in all forms of educational and social work through Toynbee Hall, but in vigorous espousal of the interests of the mass of British workers within or without the Church. In one year he 'interfered' in no less than fourteen trade disputes.<sup>85</sup> At the time of the dock strike, Toynbee Hall provided meeting

\* The Reverent Brooke Lambert, 'Jacob's Answer to Esau's Cry,' *Contemporary Review*, September 1884, Vol. 46, p. 375. Mr. Lambert says of Toynbee Hall and Oxford House: 'I am convinced that . . . the less prominent the religious element is made the more chance there is of success.'



places for strike leaders and arranged for strike meetings at Oxford and Cambridge. In elections for the London County Council, the London School Board, and parish governing bodies, leaders at Toynbee Hall were active in getting out the vote.<sup>86</sup>

Wide as was the general popular support of Canon Barnett's work, it was, like that of Stewart Headlam, the work of an outcast in the English Church. Of Canon Barnett *The Official Year Book of the Church of England* said: '. . . we can appreciate his motives while we cannot applaud his modes of action.'<sup>87</sup> Harold Spender, appraising Canon Barnett's work thirty years later, wrote:

His Church failed to follow or understand. They were shocked by the breadth of his appeal . . . Some of them did their best to drive him, as they drove Wesley, outside their fold. It was only his own great patience . . . that kept him within. But the Church of England missed another of its great chances. God sent them a St. Francis and because he did not wear a cowl and cord, they knew him not . . . Statesmen, Civil Servants, landlords, Journalists, workmen . . . have carried his teaching into practical life . . .

He did not succeed by the appeal of the Church services. There, too, [he was] bound by the tradition of the Church. When he went outside the dry bones began to live.<sup>88</sup>

Such work was not entirely without official Church support. After the death of Dean Stanley, Bishop Westcott was the leading churchman most interested in contemporary social questions. He had been influenced by Chartism in his youth, and through his friendship with Alfred Marshall he became impressed with the importance of patient investigation of social facts. As Bishop of Durham and Canon of Westminster, he developed the conviction that Christianity inevitably leads to socialism. In 1890 he summarized his views on socialism in a paper read before the Church Congress at Hull:

Individualism and Socialism correspond with opposite views of humanity. Individualism regards humanity as made up of dis-

connected or warring atoms; Socialism regards it as an organic whole, a vital unity formed by the combination of contributory members mutually interdependent . . . The aim of Socialism is the fulfilment of service, the aim of Individualism is the attainment of some personal advantage . . .<sup>89</sup>

Wage-labour, though it appears to be an inevitable step in the evolution of society, is as little fitted to represent finally or adequately the connection of man with man in the production of wealth as at earlier times slavery or serfdom.<sup>90</sup>

Bishop Westcott believed that no kind of religious faith could take the place of knowledge of social facts. The character of his religion was demonstrated by his successful intervention in the coal strike in 1890.

The various lines of endeavor represented by the Guild of St. Matthew, Toynbee Hall, and Oxford House, and by certain individuals like Bishop Westcott reached official recognition in the discussion of socialism in the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church in 1888. At this Conference there was set up, in addition to the usual committees on Intemperance, Purity, Divorce, Polygamy, Standards of Doctrine and Worship, and Relations to Other Churches—a Committee on Socialism.<sup>91</sup> This Committee was authorized to consider 'The Church's practical work in relation to Socialism.'

Its report made in the same year began by saying that Christianity has no quarrel with Socialism 'broadly defined as any scheme of social reconstruction . . . which aims at uniting labour and the instruments of labour [land and capital], whether by means of the State, or of the help of the rich, or of the voluntary co-operation of the poor.'<sup>92</sup>

But the actual content of the Report bears the mark of economic individualism and the Calvinistic virtues far more than of any interest in social organization:

[The Christian Church] has no faith in the inherent power of humanity to redeem itself from selfishness . . .

The Committee fully admit that this [that wealth should be at the service of the poor] is the ideal set before us by our Divine

Master, . . . *But they hold that there is no surer cause of failure in practical affairs than the effort to act on an ideal which has not yet been realized. If the Church is to act safely as well as sublimely, she must take the self-regarding motives with her in the long path by which she advances towards the perfect life of love . . .*

The Committee do not doubt that Government can do much to protect the class known as proletarians from the evil effects of unchecked competition . . .

But, after all, the best help is self-help. More even than increase of income, and security of deposit, thrift and self-restraint are the necessary elements of material prosperity. And in encouraging and strengthening such habit and feelings the Church's help is invaluable . . . Mutual suspicion and the imputation of selfish and unworthy motives keep apart those who have, in fact, a common aim. Intestine strife and doctrines of spoliation destroy confidence, arrest trade, and will but increase misery.<sup>93</sup> [*Italics mine.*]

An editorial in the *Church Quarterly Review* made clear the kind of socialism which was compatible with the Church of England:

. . . communism is deprecated, co-operation and thrift are recommended; competition is declared to be 'not injurious in itself, but only to become so when unrestricted'; but . . . the clergy are advised to study 'economic science,' to 'enter into friendly relations with Socialists' in order 'to understand their aims and methods' . . .<sup>94</sup>

In the following year, 1889, the Christian Social Union was formed, giving permanent expression to the social awareness shown at the Lambeth Conference. Its leader was Canon Scott Holland, who had been active in bringing the discussion of socialism before the Conference. He regarded the Christian Social Union as carrying further the ideas of Ruskin and Maurice and stated that 'For the first time in all history the poor old Church is trying to show the personal sin of corporate and social sinning.'<sup>95</sup> The object of the Christian Social Union was 'without taking up any formal propaganda to urge upon the Church the necessity of careful

and painstaking study of social questions,'<sup>96</sup> or as Bishop Westcott, one of its active members, put it, 'to make clergymen read Blue Books.' Canon Scott Holland stated unequivocally his view of the new position of the Church in regard to social questions:

We start from the conviction which has been for so long stamped on every heart that feels or brain that thinks that the time has come to vote urgency for the social question. We believe that political problems are rapidly giving place to the industrial problem which is proving itself more and more to be the question of the hour . . .

These questions . . . can only be answered by those who have got long past the merely sentimental assertion that Christ is all in all, and have set themselves to the solid task of discovering what that solemn truth really and precisely means, and have worked it down into the concrete facts.<sup>97</sup>

By 1897 the Christian Social Union had 27 branches, numbering 2,600 members, of all shades of ecclesiastical opinion within the Church. From 1891 to 1914 it published *The Economic Review* for its members. Its social activity was less vigorous than that of the Guild of St. Matthew and there was some rivalry between the two, although a number of people remained members of both organizations. The principles of the Union became somewhat milder and less specific as it developed, and its leaders took the attitude that the Church could assert Christian principles; others must elaborate the details.

The development of the new unionism at the end of the 'eighties furnished a test of the humanitarian interests of the Church. At the time of the dock strike in 1889, not only Toynbee Hall, but several parish churches in East London opened rooms to the dockers. But in general the Church stood aloof from the controversy and, in the person of the Bishop of London, was actively hostile to the workers. Of the relation of the Bishop to the dockers, Tillet said:

My respect for the Cardinal [Manning] was enhanced by the feeling I entertained towards the square-jawed, the hard-featured

Bishop of London, Dr. Temple, who had refused to assist, and answered my appeal with a letter full of the most virulent abuse for the docker and his claim for a higher wage.<sup>98</sup>

It was Temple's attack, rather than the help of Christian Socialists or Anglican laymen, which represented to British workers the attitude of the Church of England toward their attempts to get a decent physical basis for living.

Nonconformists, like Catholics and Anglicans, were trying through their faith to find answers to the fundamental questions of life. Numerically the strongest religious group in England (in 1893 the six leading Dissenting sects numbered 1,607,000 communicants and 3,103,000 children in Sunday School) the Nonconformists more than any other group carried on the principles of the early Reformation, with the modifications that the influence of Wesley had introduced in England.\* Whether deriving from the austere Protestantism of Calvin and Luther or from the fervent Evangelicalism of Wesley, their creed offered them no access to spiritual life through ecclesiasticism and ritual. The kind of direct relation to God which Protestantism offered and thrust upon man belittled him. In Luther's words he was without 'merit.' His faith emphasized his weakness rather than enhanced his stature. Unsure of his salvation or of his place in society he must labor unceasingly to prove both; work for the Protestant became not, as for the Catholic, a definite prescribed part of established ritual—*Laborare est orare*—through which the devout might attain salvation, but an unending, self-justifying pursuit, the rewards of which were not sure. It was not that the Protestant had a greater religious sanction for work, but that for the Catholic work was a definite means of salvation; he could know where he stood; the Protestant never could, and work became an end in itself.

\* Cf. Ch. I, pp. 10-14, Weber, op. cit. p. 116; Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 28, and Fromm, op. cit., pp. 53, 73. For criticisms of the extreme position of the Weber School on the influence of Calvinism on Capitalism, see H. M. Robertson, op. cit. and Heckscher, op. cit.

This Protestant doctrine lent a ready justification to letting oneself be used or using others as economic instruments, *employer* or *employ-ed*. Unceasing activity in pursuit of gain as a means of escaping helplessness and personal isolation—that is, work in response to internal compulsion, not external demand—became a characteristic feature of modern society and an invaluable pillar of capitalism. Protestantism reversed the Catholic doctrine that economic activity is a subordinate part of spiritual life. The transformation of the self-deprecating man, demonstrating his salvation to himself and to the world through economic activity, into the rational self-directing man of nineteenth-century liberalism is not as great as at first appears. Economic activity was good in itself. The early Christian idea of sacrifice continued as the individual sacrificed himself in economic pursuits. In respect to economic activity the Wesleyan creed of the personal dependence of each individual on a loving God, who could do more for His children than could any Church or any social order, reinforced the harsher Calvinism. Both could be used to strengthen individual responsibility and to still social protest.

In the nineteenth century, urbanism, dependence upon the price system, impersonal industrial integration, all emphasized the impersonality of life and the separateness of individual men. While the extension of popular education and of material means of communication provided possibilities for social contact, these did little directly to alleviate personal isolation. In the last quarter of the century, the stress on an over-simplified science, on fact finding, and Biblical criticism, strengthened belief in individual responsibility with no dependence on authority outside oneself. The idea that 'every one . . . could be his own philosopher and scientist' reinforced the tradition that any lack of independence—economic, intellectual, or spiritual—was a confession of moral inadequacy.

Beatrice Webb says of her devout mother's mid-nineteenth-century exemplification of this doctrine:

Her intellect told her that to pay more than the market rate, to exact fewer than the customary hours or insist on less than the usual strain—even if it could be proved that these conditions were injurious to the health and happiness of the persons concerned—was an act of self-indulgence, a defiance of nature's laws which would bring disaster on the individual and the community . . . Only by this persistent pursuit by each individual of his own and his family's interest would the highest general level of civilization be attained . . . \*

It was the middle class and the Poor who composed the bulk of Nonconformist congregations who most insisted on these doctrines of hard work, rigorous living, caution, and prudence. As the more prosperous tended to cross over into the Anglican fold, those who remained frequently found that carrying out the precepts of individual responsibility and hard work brought them little material regard. Hope of Heaven was important as an incentive for work and as a means of encouraging in the Poor an acceptance of their present earthly lot. In 1797 Wilberforce had expounded Christianity to the 'lower orders' reminding them:

that their more lowly path has been allotted to them by the hand of God; that it is their part faithfully to discharge its duties, and contentedly to bear its inconveniences; that the present state of things is very short; that the objects about which worldly men conflict so eagerly are not worth the contest; . . . that 'having food and raiment, they should be therewith content,' since their situation in life, with all its evils, is better than they have deserved at the hand of God; and finally, that all human distinctions will soon be done away, and the true followers of Christ will all . . . be alike admitted to the possession of the same heavenly inheritance. Such are the blessed effects of Christianity on the temporal well-being of political communities.<sup>99</sup>

\* Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship*, pp. 15-16. "The man who sells his cow too cheap goes to Hell" still epitomizes, according to John Butler Yeats, "the greater part of the religion of Belfast"—that last backwater of the sanctimonious commercialism of the nineteenth century.' (Ibid. p. 16. Quoted from John Butler Yeats, *Early Memories; Some Chapters of Autobiography*, Churchtown, Dundrum, The Cuala Press, 1923, p. 48.)

Nonconformity became a bulwark against radicalism and social unrest. In 1819 the conference of Methodist Bishops adopted a Manifesto which exhorted believers to endure any privations which social conditions inflicted upon them and not to be 'led astray' by the 'dangerous artifices' of reformers:

Remember you are Christians, and are called by your profession to exemplify the . . . influence of religion by your patience in suffering . . . Remember you belong to a Religious Society which has, from the beginning . . . recognized as . . . essential parts of Christian duty, '*to submit to magistrates for conscience's sake and not to speak evil of dignities.*'<sup>100</sup>

In the 'eighties, as in the early decades of the century, religion was still used to make the Poor able to endure life:

The poor have the Gospel preached to them still, and many a cup of pure, bright pleasure does it lift to their lips. There was a service at a little conventicle on the Surrey hills, a few Sundays ago, a sample of thousands of peasant services which are held each Sunday in our land. Poor labourers and humble tradesmen filled the place. Very hard were the lives of many of them; very long and weary their toil, very dull and sad their lot. But they were for a time in another world . . . A peasant . . . prayed for blessings which even an agnostic would recognize as good both for souls and States . . . And then they went home to their poor hovels, their cabbage, their crust, and their dull monotonous tasks, feeling that life was not all a bare dry desert; that toil and pain and sickness are not its only experience; that it has passages of joy that might gladden an angel, and hopes which lift themselves to God and heaven. There are ten thousands of such churches, let us thank God, scattered about England.\*

Beatrice Webb wrote wistfully of the passing of religion in a stronghold of Nonconformity, a mill town in the North:

[The thoughts of this class of respectable workmen] . . . are set on getting on in this world and the next;<sup>101</sup> . . . [This visit] has . . . taught me the real part played by religion in making

\* J. Baldwin Brown, 'The Relation of Christian Belief to National Life,' *Contemporary Review*, November 1880, Vol. 38, pp. 152 ff.



the English people, and of dissent teaching them the art of self-government . . . It saddens one to think that the religious faith that has united them together . . . and sustained them individually is destined to pass away . . . 'Life in Christ' and hope in another world brings ease and refinement into a mere struggle for existence, calming the restless craving after the good things of this world by an 'other worldliness.'<sup>102</sup>

Nonconformity was still the poor man's Church. Any Nonconformist who acquired wealth tended swiftly to gravitate to the respectability and prestige of the Established Church. Joseph Chamberlain, a Unitarian, was a notable exception. The solid strength of Dissent lay in the middle and lower classes. For anyone not born into the lower middle class as well as into the Congregationalist, Wesleyan, or Baptist sect, it required courage to be a Nonconformist. 'It demanded an effort and was felt to be cutting yourself off, not from the fountains of holiness, but from the main currents of secular national life.'<sup>103</sup>

In the course of the nineteenth century results of economic activity grew more substantial and the salvation demonstrated by that activity more remote. For the lower middle class, mounting profits absorbed attention. If by serving Mammon they were also serving God, they did not need to think separately about serving God; it was fortunate if they could take the next world somehow for granted while laboring tirelessly in this. Heaven was a reality, but it could remain a far-off reality as long as they were industrious, thrifty, prudent, and honest.\* The more prosperous workers shared to some extent in material goods or in the hope of material goods, and trade unions and Co-operative and Friendly Societies were lessening their sense of isolation. When depression or unemployment frustrated hope of material advancement, Heaven had become too remote to serve

\* See Weber, *op. cit.* p. 139 for discussion of Methodism as 'the methodical, systematic nature of conduct for the purpose of attaining the *certitudo salutis*'; and pp. 156-7 for discussion of the Puritan belief that the danger of wealth lay not in its possession but in any relaxation of activity as a result of it.

as a means of lulling awareness of present needs. Hope lay in a rising standard of living rather than in Heaven. Attention shifted to the misery of those who were not sharing in the good things of a world that had put its faith in these things. As soon as the depression eased, workers renewed more vigorously their fight for more of this world's goods. Still energy was concentrated on the proof of salvation and little was left for salvation. Particular dogmas and even general beliefs had become less important than tangible results as incentives to effort. But greater tangible results were being demanded, and social as well as individual ways of reaching them were being considered.

The problem of interest in social reform for Nonconformists had become a very different one than for either the 'Established' Anglicans or for the Catholics. Not being endowed, they had to rely on themselves in making the most of voluntary offerings. They had no vested interests in the temporal sphere, as did the Established Church, or in maintaining the pre-eminence of interests in the spiritual realm, as did the Catholics. They were outcasts in both worlds and working for spiritual and temporal advance did not present to them the conflict it did to other religious groups. In fighting for better conditions for the mass of the population they had no conflict between the interests of their own group and 'the People'; they were working for themselves. Extension of 'free' education was getting opportunities of education for their children. Securing better working conditions, better houses, care of health was no question of how far religious groups should practice charity; it was securing welfare for themselves.

The Reports of the Royal Commissions on Education abound in testimony showing the extent to which Dissenters struggled to get opportunities for education and free worship. Such evidence as the following is typical:

*Ques.* (Canon Gregory examining) One would think we were living in Russia instead of England to listen to the tone of your examination; one would imagine that some terrible consequence were going to happen to these poor people if they expressed

their religious convictions. I suppose you will not deny that in England everybody is absolutely free to think and say what he likes? *Ans.* Yes, he is free to do that, and others are free to inflict social penalties upon him for doing it . . . I will give you an illustration from my own case . . . I was a village minister once myself . . . in the village of Hallaton, in Leicestershire. We were building a new chapel . . . A brickmaker had contracted to supply us with bricks, but to our great astonishment the agent of the Earl of Cardigan told the brickmaker that if he supplied us with bricks for the building of our chapel he would at once receive notice to quit; he therefore told us that he could not supply us with bricks . . . there was a case not only of trying to prevent us from building the chapel, but of actually punishing a man simply for dealing with Dissenters.\*

In the situation of the 'eighties, poised for change, a small stone could start an avalanche. But it is small wonder that it was frequently a Dissenter who dislodged the small stone. It was Andrew Mearns, a minister, secretary of the Congregational Union, who wrote *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, and W. T. Stead, son of a Congregational minister, who popularized this pamphlet. The resulting popular indignation over the housing conditions of East London led to the appointment of a Royal Commission on Housing, and an eventual Housing Act.† The pamphlet roundly stated that despite all the missionary efforts of the Church, 'the flood of sin and misery is gaining upon us,' and that the Congregational Church had decided to take three of the worst districts of London *not for proselytizing* but for house to house visitation and for giving practical relief. But it maintained that the effort of the Church alone was not enough; 'The State must interfere and give people the right to live before the Church can have much chance with them.'<sup>104</sup>

Another Congregational minister, the Reverend R. W. Dale, an associate of Chamberlain and Bright in local reform

\* Testimony of Charles Williams before the Royal Commission on Elementary Education, 3 May 1887, *Third Report*, Vol. xxx, 1887, pp. 91-2. The Rev. Charles Williams was Baptist Minister at Accrington, and, until ten days before his testimony, Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

† See Ch. iv, pp. 144-52.

in Birmingham, began his pastorate with a first-hand investigation of the business and industrial life of Birmingham, because he wanted to save mid-Victorian churches from 'an exquisitely delicate and valetudinarian spirituality.'<sup>105</sup> Dr. Dale vigorously repudiated the idea that the Christian Church should be neutral on political questions. He believed that the old individualism was gone and he influenced Chamberlain, Dixon, and G. S. Wright in Birmingham to make forthright attack upon it. He was one of the pioneers in putting through the National Education Act of 1870, and some observers believed that if he instead of Forster had led the Liberals it would have been more effectively put into operation. Dale, Chamberlain, and Bright were sometimes referred to as the Triple Alliance of reform. In London as well as in Birmingham, the Congregationalists were the most influential Nonconformist body.<sup>106</sup>

Methodism was strong both in outlying districts and in London. David D. Thompson, a Methodist layman and editor writing in 1908, went so far as to declare that but for Methodism 'the trade union as it is known to-day in England would have had no existence.' He based this judgment on the fact that miners were pioneers in the labor movement,<sup>107</sup> that they were largely Methodists, and that they had their training in organization in Methodist meetings. Threlfall, who succeeded Broadhurst as secretary of the Labour Elector Association in the radical turnover in 1890, wrote of Methodism that 'The five miners' members in the House of Commons have all been trained in the Methodist Church, four being past or present local preachers. In the Parliament of 1885 there were six.' He stated that of the 'delegates attending the great miners' conferences when three to four thousand men were represented it is no exaggeration to say that fully half had served apprenticeship as local preachers.'<sup>108</sup> Thorold Rogers in his study of British economic development says, 'I do not believe the mass of peasants could have been moved at all if it had not been for the organization of the Methodist Church.'<sup>109</sup>

The Methodist Church in England was a striking example

of 'democratic centralism,' and as such a training ground for both laymen and clergy in the practice of democracy.\* The smallest unit in the organization was the 'class,' of from twenty to thirty persons of the same sex, to which every Methodist was required to belong, and which met weekly under the guidance of a lay preacher for mutual religious edification. Classes were organized into societies, and societies into circuits, the latter meeting four times a year and deciding policies by democratic vote. But combined with this 'grass roots' organization was a strong central executive, nominating pastors, stewards, and class leaders, while the Methodist Conference, of ministers only, modeled on the Presbyterian General Assembly, dominated the whole organization. Throughout the nineteenth century the two strains—democratic local control, stemming from the 'class' organization, and centralized control in the 'Conference'—struggled for dominance.

Originally the Methodists, like the Quakers, had regarded themselves as an aristocracy among Nonconformists. But, as the early Wesleyan movement started as a reform movement within the Anglican Church, so during the nineteenth century one revolt after another resulted in the formation of more democratic groups within the Methodist communion—each extending its influence further among British workers.

Most striking of these was the Salvation Army, organized in 1878 by William Booth, which by the late 'eighties had reached the recognition of mention in Parliament and had acquired property with a marketable value of more than £150,000. The Salvation Army was as definite a response to the trends of the time as was—at the opposite pole—Matthew Arnold. It began as a protest against the intellectualism of all the sects, remote from the lives of the poor. It aimed to bring the gospel to 'the lowest of the low,' untouched by the churches. In 1865 at the time of the establishment of the London Mission, which grew into the Salvation Army, Catherine Booth wrote:

\* Wilhelm Dibelius, *England*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1929, pp. 382-5. Cf. Ch. vi, pp. 199-201 on Chamberlain's organization of the Caucasus.

If the present effort disappoints us I shall feel quite tired of tugging with the churches, and shall insist on William taking a hall or theatre somewhere . . . We can't get at the masses in the chapels.<sup>110</sup>

The Salvation Army began as an attempt to preach emotional religion to East London outside the Church and the Chapel. In this attempt it was no more successful than any other evangelical agency. But at the time of the dock strike, the Salvation Army opened food depots for the strikers, and inaugurated an unprecedentedly vigorous movement on the part of a religious agency to minister to the material needs of the Poor. The campaign of purely emotional religion in East London had been a failure. General Booth was keen enough to recognize this; and he first turned the East End barracks into food and shelter depots, then established a Social Reform Wing, and finally conceived the social scheme of the book, *In Darkest England, and the Way Out*. *In Darkest England* had sold over 200,000 copies by 1891, and its success and the financial support it inspired contributed largely to the work of the Army.\*

The difference in the responses of an American, a Frenchman, and a German to the phenomenon of the Salvation Army is not without significance. To the American the work of the Army is simply a worthy moral cause:

The decision to turn the enthusiasm of the Army strongly into social channels is very recent in General Booth's mind. It is a fact of much significance that the greatest popular religious leader of this century should make so sudden and far-reaching a change.<sup>111</sup>

The Frenchman reviews it dispassionately as a natural manifestation of the trends of the times:

From the historical point of view it may be regarded as the last of the Evangelical sects . . . The Salvation Army was a corps of

\* Woods, op. cit. p. 173. The publicity given to *In Darkest England* by W. T. Stead in *The Review of Reviews* was a great factor in its popular appeal; as had been the case earlier when Stead's article in *The Pall Mall Gazette* made *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* known to a wider public.

missionaries whose sole aim was to teach the doctrine of justification by faith in its simplest form, who refused to distinguish between Christians and opened their preaching halls . . . to all indiscriminately. Their message was addressed entirely to the poor . . . and their attitude was a mark of homage to the Socialist feeling just coming to birth.<sup>112</sup>

In the pre-Hitler German the methods of the Salvation Army awakened a horror second only to that inspired by the British slums which gave rise to the Army:

These slums are the price Britain has paid for her freedom. Unrestrained selfishness on the part of landlord and urban jerry-builder alike, compelled wretched men and women to huddle in quarters that beggar description, without any interference on the part of the police . . . These facts explain why care for the poor, nowhere else a political issue, has for more than a hundred years occupied the forefront of public interest in England . . . The destitution with which he [William Booth] had to cope was more formidable than that Wesley had to deal with: the slums now held tens of thousands instead of hundreds . . . To reach these people, Booth had to employ means more crude, more vociferous and more hysterical than Wesley's. Cheap mass-suggestion, violent assaults upon the nerves, banal theatricality, the exercise of religious hypnotism through dancing, shrieking, and barbaric music reminiscent of the religious orgies of primitive peoples—all these instruments were employed by him with the skill of a virtuoso.<sup>113</sup>

In 1887, three years after the foundation of Toynbee Hall, the London Methodist Mission was founded, described by Woods as 'in many respects the most remarkable piece of church work in England.'<sup>114</sup> By 1908, 445 such missions had been established by the Methodist Church. They were really community houses used, also, for preaching services. The founding of these missions represented part of the 'Forward Movement' started by Hugh Price Hughes, editor of the *Methodist Times*—a direct approach to human misery in the simplest possible terms. To the leaders of this movement the poor of England represented not so much souls to be saved

or a social situation to be changed as miserable human beings to be helped.

The *Methodist Times*, organ of the movement, aimed to revive among Methodists 'the principles and methods of John Wesley . . . He attacked all the great social evils in plain, brave language, and did his utmost for the bodies and minds as well as the souls of men.'<sup>115</sup> Its articles exhorted Methodists to 'obey the principles of Jesus Christ rather than to follow the maxims of Adam Smith', people must be taught that 'working people are their brothers';<sup>116</sup> socialism is defined as 'sharing with the less favored';<sup>117</sup> Christians are urged to be politicians so that humanitarianism will replace utility and expediency in legislation.

Hughes' articles in the *Methodist Times* came out unequivocally for a positive program of state protection of the weak as opposed to individualism:

There is no doubt that the New Liberalism rejects the heartless conclusions of doctrinaire political Economy . . . The old dread of state action has passed away now that there is some guarantee that the resources of the Government will be used not to create or buttress the privilege of the few but to promote the well-being of the entire community . . . the State may legitimately be required to afford some protection . . . to the victims of its own neglect and mistakes. We are keenly alive to the perils of State action. But we are ready to run some risk in a determined effort to secure at least that the poor shall have a chance of possessing healthy bodies and . . . to place within the reach of every one of them the highest educational development of which they are capable . . .<sup>118</sup>

The large measure of identity of Nonconformist congregations with the part of the population newly come to democratic privileges, and of Nonconformist practices with the growing recognition of needs of the whole people, would suggest a growing strength in Nonconformist sects at the end of the century. But as the Established Church of England had frequently gained secular power at the cost of spiritual vitality and influence, so relaxation of restrictions against Dissenters and greater adaptation of Dissenters to the secular



canons, as well as co-operation and federation among different sects, opened the way to indifference. Escott described the period as one that combined diluted religious activities with toleration:

It is not, an age in which men would go to the stake with an unshaken conviction that they were sacrificing life for an infallible faith. It is rather an age in which men write pamphlets and essays, promulgate manifestoes, and, if necessary, incur lawsuits, with the loud-voiced and often-repeated assertion that they . . . only can be, in the right. It is an age in which obstinacy is likely to be mistaken for belief . . . an age in which enthusiasm does not necessarily mean intensity, and in which fervor is often in an inverse proportion to noise; an age in which all religions are highly organized, but not on that account generally and profoundly believed in; an age of observance, more than conviction, of worship in a greater degree than faith.<sup>119</sup>

England tended to think of itself as a religious nation. Until the Reform Act of 1867 the number of Englishmen who had some religious affiliation was greater than the number of voters. But after 1867, and still more after 1884, the number of voters far exceeded the number of active members of Christian churches. Hence the growth of democracy compelled the English to realize what hitherto in their contempt for the People they had deliberately ignored, that English piety, especially that of the Anglican Church, might after all be another manifestation of the class system, a somewhat superficial phenomenon, the appurtenance of a few.<sup>120</sup> According to the most liberal estimate, considerably less than half of the population had any religious affiliation or were even provided with any place of worship.\* In 1892 George

\*Out of a population of over 38,000,000 in Great Britain in 1893, the Church of England had 1,778,351 communicants and 2,329,813 children attending Sunday School, and it provided accommodations for 6,718,288 in its places of worship. In addition, the six leading Nonconformist denominations had 1,607,023 communicants and 3,103,285 children attending Sunday Schools and provided accommodation for 7,610,000. (Howard Evans, 'Religious Statistics of England and Wales,' *Contemporary Review*, February 1897, Vol. LXXI, pp. 276 f., and 'The Seats,' *ibid.* September 1897, Vol. LXXII, pp. 417 ff.)

There were as of 1891, 1,357,000 Catholics in England and Wales. (Figures

Cadbury, a Quaker, undertook a religious census of Birmingham in order to give a basis for co-operation among denominations. What he found, to his dismay, was that the total accommodation of all places of worship—Anglican, Catholic, and Nonconformist—sufficed for little more than a quarter of the population.<sup>121</sup> Charles Booth's survey offered similar evidence for London.\*

The fact that only a minority of the nation had any formal religious affiliation did not mean that the rest of the population was indifferent to religious values. Bradlaugh might refuse to take an oath and Morley might carefully spell God with a small g, but, through science, or beyond science, these men, too, were asserting the reach of possibilities in human nature and in the universe beyond their immediate grasp.

The development in the second half of the century variously called secularism, or rationalism, or, in Huxley's word, agnosticism, was a protest against the religion of the sects, but was itself one form of a search for answers to the basic questions of religion. Bradlaugh's atheism was in the Tom Paine tradition; Morley's rationalism was an eighteenth-century product; but the strength of the secularist movement derived from the new ways of looking at the world, which were the product of science and of 'higher' criticism as opposed to 'revealed' religion. Secularism meant, negatively, that attention was directed elsewhere than to the kinds of religious issues discussed in the churches, and, positively, that the churches were being directly challenged by reason as embodied in science and by emphasis on secular aspects of human welfare. According to Leslie Stephen:

The Pope and General Booth still condemn each other's tenets; and in case of need would, I suppose, take down the old rusty

derived from Catholic sources, quoted in Halévy, *A History of the English People*: 1895-1905, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1926, p. 186.)

\* Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 3rd Series, Religious Influences. Although the Anglican Church was still the 'Established' Church, there were in England more than 130 separate denominations. (Escott, *England*, p. 452.)

weapons from the armoury. But each sees with equal clearness that the real stress of battle lies elsewhere. Each tries, after his own fashion, to give a better answer than the Socialists to the critical problems of to-day.<sup>122</sup>

Thomas Henry Huxley, as a member of the School Board set up after 1870, referred to a 'Third Party . . . of daily increasing significance,' a party having nothing to do with the controversy between Protestants and Catholics and Anglicans over the schools, 'pushing its own way independent of them, having its own religion and its own morality; the scientific party.'<sup>123</sup> Like Huxley, Spencer, Frederic Harrison, and Matthew Arnold conceived that in criticizing the churches they were not abandoning religion but laying the foundations for a more living religion and morality.

To a critic this appeared as a hollow evasion of the real issues:

Mr. Spencer gives us the hint of a God discovered by Science, but no adequate religion; Mr. Harrison the hint of a religion found in and derived from Humanity, but no worshipful God; and Mr. Matthew Arnold has added to Mr. Spencer's hint of a God found in Nature, and Mr. Harrison's hint of a religion found in Humanity, a worship based upon fable and fiction, with which he asks us, self-deluded, to beguile ourselves, that we may feed the spirit within us, which needs the satisfaction of a true life.\*

But by the 'seventies and 'eighties two changes had taken place in regard to rationalism: it was no longer regarded as wicked and daring by those who took their orthodoxy for granted, and it was no longer regarded as obligatory for 'advanced' thinkers, a doctrine primarily of criticism and attack which had pronounced the last word on the universe. There might be something beyond what natural science called facts as well as beyond what political economy called

\* Bennett S. Rowe, 'Spencer—Harrison—Arnold: An Eclectic Essay,' *Contemporary Review*, August 1885, Vol. 48, p. 209; see Ch. III, pp. 82-4, for discussion of Frederic Harrison's religion of Positivism which he took from Comte.

rational and what Protestantism called moral. Rationalism as well as religion had become a field for exploration.

Mill refrained from publishing his *Three Essays on Religion* in the 'sixties as too much of a shock to public opinion. John Seeley published *Ecce Homo*<sup>124</sup> anonymously in 1865-6, and Gladstone wrote that no volume since *Vestiges of Creation* had attracted anything like the attention and criticism bestowed upon it; it displeased both orthodox and radical.<sup>125</sup> But when Seeley published *Natural Religion*<sup>126</sup> in 1882, a year before the *Expansion of England* and equally a sign of the times, the *Annual Register* gave it a matter-of-fact review:

The author of 'Ecce Homo' gives in 'Natural Religion' . . . a very clear and brilliant interpretation of the feeling of a large section of thinkers in the present day, as to the bearing of science . . . on religion as hitherto conceived. It has seemed of late as if the strife between the Church and Science has been stilled; not through any reconciliation, but a recognition of the hopelessness of finding any common ground. Professor Seeley has found this ground in extending the term religion . . . to art, science, and culture—in fact, everything that, as a great ideal, offers possibilities of enthusiasm and worship. That the substance of religion is culture, not supernaturalism, is the keynote of 'Natural Religion.'<sup>127</sup>

Belfort Bax in 1918 wrote:

During the seventies . . . a further advance was made toward the breaking down of this religious obscurantism, but it was not until the eighties that it definitely and finally collapsed . . . The taking of Charles Bradlaugh . . . into the bosom of British Respectability about the close of this period was only one of the straws showing the shift in the direction of the social current.<sup>128</sup>

By the late 'eighties Spencer as the Prophet of God the Unknowable in the Religion of Science was being regarded as increasingly 'thin in matter and thick in manner';<sup>129</sup> and Frederic Harrison was proclaiming Comte's religion of humanity, bringing 'the spirit of modification to the science and service of Man'<sup>130</sup> to empty halls. But Hux-

ley and Matthew Arnold were still preaching the new gospel to England. The writings of both make it abundantly clear that the beliefs they advocated were for them not only criticisms of a creed outworn but a positive affirmation of faith.

Huxley after the death of his son wrote to Charles Kingsley, who had urged upon him belief in personal immortality:

Whoso clearly appreciates all that is implied in the falling of a stone can have no difficulty about any doctrine simply on account of its marvellousness. But the longer I live, the more obvious it is to me that the most sacred act of a man's life is to say and to feel 'I believe such and such to be true.' . . . *Sartor Resartus* led me to know that a deep sense of religion was compatible with the entire absence of theology . . . science and her methods gave me a resting-place independent of authority and tradition . . . if that great and powerful instrument for good or evil, the Church of England, is to be saved from being shivered into fragments by the advancing tide of science . . . it must be by the efforts men, who, like yourself, see your way to the combination of the practice of the Church with the spirit of science.<sup>131</sup>

Constantly Huxley protested against the view that acceptance of the theory of evolution or the teachings of science gave answers to questions of worship or of morality. In 1894 he wrote to Thomas Common:

There are two very different questions which people fail to discriminate. One is whether evolution accounts for morality, the other whether the principle of evolution in general can be adopted as an ethical principle.

The first . . . [I] have constantly insisted upon. The second I deny, and reject all so-called evolutionary ethics based upon it.<sup>132</sup>

In *Evolution and Ethics* he maintained that:

Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest . . . but of those who are ethically the best.

. . . In place of ruthless self-assertion [virtue] demands . . . that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellow; . . .<sup>133</sup>

He felt himself one with Matthew Arnold in attempting to preserve religion through demolishing dogma, and wrote to him: 'Science is gradually conquering the materialism out of religion.'<sup>134</sup>

But Huxley's reverence for the wonder of the universe did not prevent him from feeling that final answers are after all very simple:

Teach a child what is wise, that is *morality*. Teach him what is wise and beautiful, that is *religion*!<sup>135</sup>

Matthew Arnold was regarded by R. H. Hutton, editor of the *Spectator*, as the most characteristic Oxonian of the third quarter of the century, as Newman was of the second quarter.<sup>136</sup> Like Huxley, Matthew Arnold was a lover of the Bible and of the teaching of Jesus. Like Huxley, he was a student and admirer of Spinoza. Like Huxley, he was a critic of dogmatic Christianity and, more than Huxley, of an age which put its faith in machinery—whether machinery of factories, of politics, of science, or of economic advance. But, although Arnold could give religion a definition as simple as Huxley's—'morality touched with emotion,' his view of religion and of the place of religion in life was more subtle and more complex than Huxley's. Both men had conflicts over the objects of faith, but the man of science had no conflict in regard to ways of attaining truth; the man of letters did. Up to a point, for Arnold, religion and 'culture' were one:

Not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming, is the character of perfection as culture conceives it; and here, too, it coincides with religion.<sup>137</sup>

But 'culture' was for Arnold even greater than religion, and his real devotion was to culture as offering the possibility of expansion of all the powers of man. Culture was all-embracing, but in *Literature and Dogma* he set the humanistic tra-

dition, as identified with culture, over against science. He regarded science here not as an expanding experience, but as a limitation, confining the experience of man to intellect and knowledge. Arnold would have agreed with Butler, that 'the men of religion tell a lot of little lies for the sake of one big truth, and the men of science tell a lot of little truths for the sake of one big lie.' It was not science but literature which was to be the emancipator of orthodox religion. Arnold strove through literature—literature in its widest sense, not *belles lettres*, but 'All knowledge that reaches us through books' <sup>138</sup>—to reconstruct the foundations of theology. He believed this to be the essential function of literature in his generation, and literary criticism to be more useful for this purpose than either natural science or philosophic theory.<sup>139</sup> But the value of literature for him, as of science for Huxley, and religion for William James, lay in its meaning in human experience. In experience, literature, science, and religion met on common ground and it was this common ground which was important.

In his attempt to restore living faith to religion Arnold directed his chief attacks against Nonconformity as the most arid and limiting form of religion. But since for Arnold himself morality came to be more and more a negative thing, an absence of evil, it is probable that his preference for the Established Church—of the same order as his desire for a stronger State—was due more to its dignity as an organized, established institution than to the foundation of its beliefs. Arnold liked the idea of new experience better than living through a new experience. He was wistful for a lost faith; he preferred cherishing a culture of tradition to seeking a new culture at the risk of anarchy.

In 1888 there appeared the most widely read publication of the period, *Robert Elsmere* <sup>140</sup> by Mrs. Humphry Ward, Arnold's niece. This novel was built around the religious issues with which both Huxley and Arnold struggled and its reception shows the importance of these issues to the people of England. Its sale soon passed a million, and its readers were many times that number. So much was it a part of the

thinking of all literate England that the question was suggested for the 1890 census: What do you think of *Robert Elsmere*? The novel is the biography of a highly endowed young man who, despite the prevailing atmosphere of Oxford and the influence of T. H. Green (the Grey of the novel), became a clergyman. In his pastorate, which was marked by concern with active social work, he encountered opposition from the High Church and threats to his faith from science and intellectual radicalism. He came to believe that Christian dogma based on miracles had alienated the working classes from Christian faith and Christian ethics, and founded a Brotherhood for the propagation of an untheological, social Christianity, which should bring class harmony instead of class conflict.

The position of Christianity on the defensive represented in *Robert Elsmere* was reflected widely in the discussions of the period. The following is typical:

When a large constituency chooses to be represented in Parliament by an eminent atheist, even though Parliament makes a difficulty of receiving him . . . when it is not uncommon to find oneself in company where a good deal more courage is necessary to profess Christianity than Atheism, a warning against Christian bigotry if it is to be forceful should take a historic form . . . as Christians have become more tolerant, Atheists have become more hostile to Christianity.<sup>141</sup>

The mid-Victorian period of external optimism stilling internal doubt, of belief in action as clarifying emotional difficulties, of a pervasive evangelicalism which touched all creeds and all persons, from the agnostic George Eliot who said, 'all self-sacrifice is good,' to Cardinal Newman who wrote,

I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,  
Pride ruled my will; remember not past years.

—was making way for a new kind of apprehension. The monopoly of the Anglican Church was broken; Dissenters were becoming socially respectable; secularism was, if not accepted, becoming intellectually respectable; evangelical en-



ergy was being diverted from the Calvinist position of the conviction of individual sin and salvation through individual effort to concern for social ills and salvation through social reform. But the basic questions reasserted themselves. Perhaps the answers men sought were to be found neither in secular culture nor in Christian collectivism. There were many who felt that

Mr. Arnold's neo-Christianity is essentially a religion for the cultivated and comfortable . . . it is an *article de luxe* . . . no more fit to serve those who need religion for their support in poverty, in sickness, and under deadly temptations, than whipped cream is fit to stay the stomach of a hungry man.<sup>142</sup>

Others found the best of social humanitarianism sand for hungry souls.

G. N. Young sees *In Memoriam* not only as an epitome of the period in which it was written, but also as a foreshadowing of the possibilities and difficulties in the new freedom which lay ahead:

*In Memoriam* is one of the cardinal documents of the mid-Victorian mind, its ardent curiosity . . . its unwillingness to quit, and its incapacity to follow, any chain of reasoning which seems likely to result in an unpleasant conclusion . . . The age was learning, but it had not mastered, the lesson that truth lies not in the statement but in the process: it had a childlike craving for certitude, as if the natural end of every refuted dogma was to be replaced by another dogma. Raised in the dark and narrow framework of Evangelical and of economic truth, it wilted in the sunlight . . . New freedom is a painful thing, most painful to the finest minds, who are most sensitive to the breaking-up of faiths and traditions and most apprehensive of the outcome.<sup>143</sup>

Confronted by the possibilities and hazards of the new freedom, some tried to find their way back to some form of mystical religion. Others sought positive content in a new individualism, not alien to concern for social welfare. The two trends accentuated each other and caused further divergence. The preoccupation of some groups in the Church

of England and in the Roman Catholic Church with problems remote from the market place led other members of these faiths and many Nonconformists to a primary emphasis on humanitarianism. But the accommodation of the churches to material concerns of humanity threatened their existence as religious faiths. This left a special place for those religious groups—the High Church Anglicans and the Roman Catholics—who affirmed the supernatural in religion regardless of the trends of the time. And at the end of the century there was some evidence that these groups were gaining in strength at the expense of Nonconformists, and that some branches of Nonconformists were developing a new mysticism.

Realization of the possibilities for individual development inherent in the new freedom could not be based upon a denial of the values represented in either of these trends in the religious life of the time: values represented in humanitarianism, which said man must have bread, and values represented in mysticism, which said man cannot live by bread alone. If Calvinism or Catholicism had found a formula that lulled the Christian conscience and enabled the organized Church to by-pass social conflict, the moral paradox at the core of a competitive society living ostensibly by Christian values had remained. Both humanitarianism, by demanding that people should not starve in a society which put its faith in plenty, and mysticism, by demanding something more of life than material abundance, forced attention to this paradox. In the terms of humanitarians and mystics, as well as of rationalists, liberalism was a philosophy incapable of dealing with this dilemma. It left men free to live without the material basis of life, free to speak but with nothing of their own to say, free to believe but with nothing positive to believe in, free to worship but with nothing in which to place their faith.

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## IX. *Education*

BRITISH education in the nineteenth century served as a means of personal security and of control on the part of the ruling class and as an instrument for securing freedom on the part of the ruled; as a means of preserving established beliefs and a means of spreading new ideas. Conflicting groups, religious and secular, classical and technical, fought out their claims in the field of education.

This was nothing new. From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the Tudors and Stuarts had championed respectively the interests of separate colleges and of the two great universities; through the controversy between the Anglican National Society for the Education of the Poor and the rival British and Foreign School Society of the Dissenters, in the eighteen-thirties; to the controversy between the 'Voluntary' Church Elementary Schools and the 'Free' or 'Provided' state schools which persists today—competing groups have used the schools and universities of the nation in a struggle for dominance. And from the time of the Reformation to the present the actual functions, rarely or never stated, of these various enterprises which went under the name of 'education' have been as diverse as their avowed aims.

During the period of the Reformation, education in Scotland had been a means of fighting 'Popish superstition' \* and in England an instrument for seizing the educational endow-

\* 'In order to fight "Popish superstition" the National Church, then the State, in Scotland established an elementary school in every parish, a grammar school in every market town, and a university in every city.' (Gilbert Slater, *The Making of Modern England*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2nd American ed., p. 182.)

ments of the Catholic Church and establishing class monopoly in education,\* as the diminished funds for education were in the hands of private individuals who held the confiscated Church lands.

From this time on Oxford and Cambridge, and later the great 'Public Schools' which fed them, had as their main aim and function developing English gentlemen—a group secure in its own roots, which provided the governing class for Britain and the Empire. The universities were an ornament of the aristocracy, an instrument of class distinction, an indispensable means of reaching political leadership. The requirements changed somewhat with the centuries. At the time of the Stuart Restoration, the universities, hitherto open to all, were made open only to those who would join the upper class by supporting the Royalist cause and affirming Anglican principles. Aspirants to the legal and medical as well as to the clerical professions who would not profess adherence to the Thirty-nine Articles were forced to get their training elsewhere. The medieval tradition of learning for all who could learn associated with the university gave way to the class interests of the separate colleges, strong supporters of the aristocracy and of the Crown.

Gibbon's description of Oxford in the eighteenth century suggests the extent to which other interests had usurped the place of scholarship:

The schools of Oxford and Cambridge were founded in a dark age of false and barbarous science, and they are still tainted with the vices of their origin . . . The government still remains in the hands of the Clergy . . . The legal incorporation of these societies by the charters of Popes and Kings has given them a mo-

\* Such class monopoly and such social differentiation as existed in the nineteenth century were, however, of somewhat slow growth. Writing of 'The State of England, 1603-1640,' George Macaulay Trevelyan says:

'The education of gentlemen's sons varied more . . . than in these days when all are found together in the "public school" . . . The belief that higher education . . . is . . . a monopoly of the rich had not yet penetrated the English mind.' (*England under the Stuarts*, London, Macmillan, 1925, pp. 14-15.)

nopoly of the public instruction; and the spirit of monopolists is narrow, lazy, and oppressive . . .<sup>1</sup>

Bentham's impression was similar:

Generally speaking, the tutors and professors at Oxford offered nothing to win the affections of Bentham. Some of them were profligate; and he was shocked at their profligacy; others were morose and their moroseness alienated him; but the greatest part of them were insipid; and he had no taste for insipidity<sup>2</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, stodginess and insipidity still reigned. The High Church was still in control—'not the spiritual and other-worldly High Church that would be born in fifteen years' time, but the High Church of the 18th century, with its stolid conservatism and imperturbable apathy.'<sup>3</sup> Lord Amberley, son of Lord John Russell and father of Bertrand Russell, spent the year 1860-61 at the University of Edinburgh, as Lord John had spent the years 1809-12, because Lord John still believed that there was 'nothing to be learned in the English universities.'<sup>4</sup> Various efforts had been made to bring about an intellectual revival in both Oxford and Cambridge but at neither university was learning or wisdom essential to its main purpose. Most of the undergraduates came from the nobility and landed gentry. For the ablest the University was a preliminary to political life. For the rest it was 'entirely and exclusively a club of young men who had come up on leaving their public school to learn the art of spending money.'<sup>5</sup> Lord Brougham, who, like Russell, was educated at Edinburgh, was perhaps the only Englishman of the first half of the century who could hold his own with continental scientists. And if Peel, Gladstone, Grote, and James Mill, among others, did succeed in brilliantly transcending as well as incorporating their classical education, it is as much an indication of the fact that a man of sufficient ability can make use of anything to get an education as of the value of the kind of education the universities offered.

Secondary schools, the great Public Schools of England, although originally religious foundations taking charity pupils

had, by the early nineteenth century, a large majority of paying pupils and had become like the two universities practically obligatory—unless the alternative was a private tutor at home—for the children of the gentry and nobility. Like the universities, too, they gave an education founded on the Classics and Mathematics. Benthamites urged in vain an education extended to the whole population, and one which took into account the present and future as well as the past. To the leaders of the Church of England extension of education was an irrelevant middle-class idea; it was not the concern of the ruling class. Canon Bell of Westminster said in 1832:

It is not proposed that the children of the poor be educated in an expensive manner, or even taught to write and to cypher. Utopian schemes, for the Universal diffusion of general knowledge, would soon . . . confound that distinction of ranks and classes of society, on which the general welfare hinges, and the happiness of the lower orders, no less than that of the higher depends.<sup>9</sup>

Educational enterprises outside the public schools and universities had either the function of outflanking this educational monopoly or of extending it to education of the Poor.

The seventeenth century saw various sporadic attempts at popular education, with charitable and religious intention, opposed by the Church, which capped its suppression in 1662 by the Act of Uniformity, making it impossible for anyone to teach except by permission of a bishop. The industrial developments of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sweeping children into the factories, emphasized the ignorance of the mass of the people and spawned as by-products efforts to provide some education for the children of England. Robert Raikes, a pious printer, founded Sunday Schools in 1782 to give children some scraps of information in addition to teaching them to read the Bible.

Early in the nineteenth century people of all shades of opinion were beginning to recognize that the children of the nation were in a state of 'brutal ignorance and heathenish

irreligion.' <sup>7</sup> But no concerted action could be taken because the Church of England and the Dissenters still preferred to fight for their special interests rather than to find a common ground for educating the nation. The Nonconformists would not stand an Anglican clergyman in a State school. The Established Church would not stand anyone else. In 1839 a proposal to establish a government normal school was defeated by the Church, jealous for its control over the greater part of the educational machinery of the country. Four years later, the Dissenters took their revenge by defeating plans for the education of factory children.

In this situation, with no responsibility for education assumed by the nation, a great variety of educational ventures, with all manner of conflicting aims, sprang up through voluntary effort. A general plan for education was impossible, but in the nineteenth century separate educational enterprises could be started by anyone with an idea and a little money or a few adherents. Early in the nineteenth century Lord Brougham started the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, and Andrew Bell of the Church of England had started rival societies to 'educate the poor.' In 1833 the government made its first appropriation for education, £20,000, to be spent for school buildings, upon recommendation of either the British and Foreign School Society (Nonconformist) or the 'National Society for the Education of the Children of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church.'

The religious emphasis in these early efforts toward education of the poor appears in the schools controlled by both societies. It was not until 1839 that the British and Foreign School Society abandoned the rule which made the Bible the only reading lesson book.<sup>8</sup> The National (Anglican) Schools, also, made the Scriptures the basis of instruction in arithmetic as well as in reading:

There were seven days between the birth of Jesus and his circumcision, and five days from that event to the Epiphany, the time when the star led the Gentiles to worship the holy child. How long was it from the Nativity to the Epiphany? . . .

At the marriage in Cana in Galilee, there were six water pots of stone, holding two or three firkins a-piece. If they held two firkins how much water would it take to fill them? and how much if they held three each?

Our Lord showed himself to the Apostles forty days after his passion. For how many weeks was he seen? <sup>9</sup>

A—is an angel, who praises the Lord;

B—is for Bible, God's most holy word;

C—is for Church, where the righteous resort;

D—is for devil—D is for devil—D is for devil who wishes our hurt.<sup>10</sup>

Recognition of the need for education played a part in the Factory Act of 1802. In 1835 charitable motives triumphed over religious in the establishment of the Home and Colonial School Society and the Ragged School Union for elementary education. The government at the same time established some schools for paupers in workhouses. In 1839 James Shuttleworth, who had been a pioneer of popular education in Manchester, was made chairman of a committee of the Privy Council whose concern was education.

In the second quarter of the century extensions of secondary education fostered by Bentham and James Mill and their followers added economics and natural science to a curriculum of the classics and called attention to 'knowledge and reason' in addition to 'character building' as important in education. At the same time there were established by private philanthropists Mechanics Institutes to bring to artisans some sort of general and technical education. By 1861 there were over a thousand of these Institutes throughout England with a membership of 200,000.<sup>11</sup>

A little later, attempts to extend higher education beyond the very small group of Anglicans who attended Oxford and Cambridge \* broke the religious monopoly of higher education. Small universities, founded to give higher education to Dissenters, sprang up in various places: the People's College in Sheffield, the Workingman's College in London, Owens

\* In 1827 there were 3,000 students at Oxford and Cambridge, as against 4,000 in the Scottish universities.



College in Manchester, Mason's College in Birmingham, Bedford College for Women in London. University College, London, had been founded as early as 1827 by a group of Utilitarian liberals who were non-churchmen. It was entirely secular, with a curriculum very much broader than that of the older universities, and it introduced for the first time into England the idea, common in Germany and Scotland, of a university which provided specific training for professions. It served as a standard for other institutions of higher learning outside the two great universities, but such universities made their way only slowly, being neither sufficiently utilitarian nor, on the other hand, sufficient in social advantage for middle-class taste. A little after the middle of the century London University acquired the right to give its degrees to any fit candidate, no matter where he had studied.

But, although various educational possibilities existed, it was under nineteenth-century liberalism a matter of money and of chance whether a particular child could profit by any of them. Before 1870 voluntary initiative had failed to provide a school place for more than one child in two in London and one in three or five in the rest of the nation.\* The Education Act of 1870 made education for the first time the direct concern of the nation, but education was still not compulsory and it was not free. The Act of 1876 recognized the principle of compulsory education and the Act of 1880 made education compulsory until the age of ten with a statement of 'educational proficiency' in reading, writing, and arithmetic, or until the age of fourteen without such statement of proficiency. In 1891 education up to these ages was made free. The Act of 1902 setting up administrative substitutes for the School Boards again strengthened the position of the Anglican Church in education. The Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 had abolished property qualification for the fran-

\* G. A. N. Lowndes, *The Silent Social Revolution: An Account of the Expansion of Public Education in England and Wales: 1895-1935*, London, Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 3. State grants to various agencies for education in England and Wales increased between 1851 and 1861 from £150,000 to £813,000. At the same time the illiteracy rate for men fell from 30.7 per cent to 24.6 per cent; for women from 45.2 per cent to 34.7 per cent.

chise. In 1918 for the first time all property qualifications for education up to fourteen were abolished. But with fees for secondary schools and universities, property qualification for education beyond the age of fourteen still remains.

Escott described what this education by chance meant before the Act of 1870:

The lad of exceptional brightness . . . attracted the notice of the parson or squire . . . and a philanthropic patron interested himself in his case. If it was the clergyman, he perhaps instructed the rising prodigy for a few hours every week . . .

The good man enlisted the sympathy of friends on behalf of his protege, secured him a nomination to the foundation of one of our big schools, or else undertook in conjunction with others, to be responsible for the costs of his teaching. The lad . . . won a scholarship, and went to Oxford or Cambridge, the laureate of the freshmen of his year . . . He would finish up his college course with a First Class and a Fellowship, would go into the Church or the Bar . . .

On the other hand, if our ideal village youth failed to attract the notice of some . . . patron . . . he probably lived out his life in obscurity . . . It was thus simply a matter of accident whether the cottager's clever son ever rose to the place which his abilities entitled him to fill, and what was true of the country cottager was true of the town artisan . . . there was no scheme of national and systematized teaching . . . Children were sent to school or doomed prematurely to depressing and toilsome labour, or left to play about the streets to develop into pickpockets and thieves, fearing no other authority but the constable, according to the whim of their parents . . .<sup>12</sup>

The Elementary Education Act of 1870, fostered by Morley, Chamberlain, and the Birmingham Reformers and passed by the Liberal Government, marked the recognition that *laissez-faire* in education had failed. It embodied three important trends of the time:

1. It provided state supervision for elementary education instead of leaving it an Anglican monopoly.\* Morley's papers

\* The Anglican Church clearly recognized the threat which the Act embodied. 'The Church of England felt . . . that it was fighting for its life. When the National Education League was formed to urge education upon

on educational reform in the *Fortnightly Review* had been 'first and above all an indictment of the Church of England and its clergy'; secondarily an exposure of the 'thoroughly bad and inefficient instruction in the denominational schools.' \* By making a 'Board School' with unsectarian religious instruction available in every district it definitely aimed to provide education for children of Nonconformists who, being for the most part in the lower economic groups, could not afford to provide their own schools.

2. The Education Act of 1870 was a direct outcome of the Reform Act of 1867; it was a recognition that extension of political democracy inevitably involved education. The Reform Act rendered obsolete such ideas as that of Lord Melbourne, that he 'questioned the advantage of general education as a means of promoting knowledge in the world, since people get on without it'; and of the Bishop of Durham that 'education was not likely to make its way among the poor'; and of the Bishop of Exeter that if as rector he had started a school in his parish the squire would have laughed in his face.<sup>13</sup>

3. The Act of 1870 was an implicit recognition of and an attempt to meet German trade rivalry. Not until after the Reform Act of 1867, and the industrial threat of a united North America and a triumphant Germany, was it clearly recognized that the voluntary school system had failed. 'The price paid for sectarian passion was that England entered the fierce economic competition after 1870 with artisans the least trained, and a middle class the worst educated, in Europe.'<sup>14</sup> What Alfred Marshall called the Englishman's 'dull sense of superiority,' which extended to the artisans

the Gladstone ministry, adherents of the Church organized a counter force, the National Education Union, which convened school-masters, prepared reports, and held mass meetings. One of these, "a vast assemblage of all rank of society," of "different creeds and denominations" united for the purpose of maintaining the ascendancy of the Established Church, was presided over by the Earl of Shaftsbury.' (Clarence Ayres, *Huxley*, New York, Norton, 1932, p. 139.)

\* Everett, op. cit. p. 156 Morley believed that even the Act of 1870 went much too far toward recognizing Anglican supremacy

who dominated the trade unions, was running against the German's methodical adaptation of trading methods to market idiosyncrasies and against the refined technological training of a rising generation of Germans. It was not until after the turn of the century that English business men were to realize in earnest the relation between the backward state of English technical education and the decline of British industrial leadership,\* and the frightened middle class put pressure on the surviving recalcitrant 'old' unionists. But as early as 1870 some Englishmen were coming to believe that English education might have something to learn from Germany. In 1872 this feeling was heightened by the report of a British deputation which visited Germany and Switzerland to study their methods of education:

In Saxony we found a national system of education . . . with scholarships admitting clever poor boys from elementary to secondary, and thence to technical schools, or to the Polytechnic or University. Attendance was compulsory till the age of fourteen. In England at that time . . . there were no secondary schools for the masses; and therefore no promotion of able students from below. 'The best educated children in English elementary schools were half-timers from the factories, who attended half-time from eight to thirteen. In Germany the boys who left school at fourteen were required to attend evening continuation schools . . . All the Universities and Colleges in England together contained less students 'taking up research and the higher branches of chemistry' than a single German University . . . [Munich] which was visited.<sup>15</sup>

If in the first half of the century England had gone forward industrially because it was learning empirically the technique of mass production with large groups of men working in co-ordination, by 1870 the world of science and

\* In 1880 the *Annual Register* published the following figures comparing German and English education:

	<i>Population</i>	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Scholars</i>	<i>Cost per Head of Population</i>
Germany . . . . .	42,000,000	60,000	6,000,000	2 s. 11½ d.
England . . . . .	34,000,000	58,000	3,000,000	1 s. 10½ d

(*Annual Register*, n.s., 'Chronicle of Events,' p. 22.)

technology was in turn learning the lesson of group effort, as the Germans were clearly demonstrating. If 'education of character obtained from individual activities' and the alertness learned on playing field and the fo'c'sles of the seven seas were well adapted to stimulate that sort of invention which was most valued in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries the second half of the century 'called increasingly for a new class of improvements of method, and . . . of appliances, which cannot be created by a single alert individual.'<sup>16</sup>

But the Education Act of 1870, with all its subsequent extensions through the Act of 1918, did not bring a new era in English education. Within the last five years the *New Statesman and Nation*, in reviewing two books on English education by T. C. Worsley, has said:

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the public schools were purely barbarian . . . in the hands of Arnold of Rugby and Thring of Uppingham their crude barbarism was overlaid with a thick covering of bourgeois respectability and Christianity . . . In the class society of the latter days of the nineteenth century the function of the public school was to train the young of the dominant classes to exercise power in a society built upon an economic and social hierarchy of classes. It did this with outstanding success. The public school system was and still is one of the strongest bulwarks against the growth of democracy.<sup>17</sup>

The products whom the public schools are in fact turning out have to-day become objects of criticism rather than of admiration . . . We are still to all intents and purposes the two nations of Disraeli's time, and . . . the source of our division is to be found in our two systems of education, one for 80 per cent., conducted at the public expense, and ending at 14; and the other for the remaining 20 per cent., conducted largely at private expense, and continuing to 18 or even 22, the factor determining to which system a boy shall be allocated being not his ability to profit by its treatment, but the size of his father's bank balance . . . we may find that just as it took one war . . . to make women into citizens, so it may be placed to the credit of another that it has induced us to educate our children.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, with all the variations in aim and actual function which marked the diverse educational enterprises of nineteenth-century England these various forms of education nevertheless operated within a certain common ethos. Never, even in the most expansive and optimistic days of liberalism, was there any idea that education could help individuals to create that positive and spontaneous liberty which Mill, Arnold, and other discerning persons sought. Instead, the negative freedom, unsupported by the culture, which was the freedom of nineteenth-century liberalism, lacked any positive educational program. Haldane wrote in 1888:

. . . The new problem of Liberalism has . . . been considered very little by Liberals. The most remarkable illustration of this . . . is . . . that we have never yet formulated our educational programme.<sup>19</sup>

In absence of plan, education simply followed the structured authoritarianism of society. This was as true of the Board Schools founded under the Act of 1870 as of Oxford and Cambridge. The aim of education, whatever form it took, was to train leaders and to train followers. Both obeyed the unstated rules of their society and of their position in it. The leaders were not men striking out on lines of their own but the most complete embodiment of the virtues of their class. The followers were not persons actually sharing in the privileges and prerogatives of their newly acquired educational and political freedom, but persons given the kind of education appropriate to the kind of function they were supposed to fill, in complement to their leaders, in society.

From both sides of the authoritarian pattern this appears. In the public schools and universities were nurtured the leaders of empire:

Carlyle, who visited and admired Rugby, might well have written of Thomas Arnold as 'The Hero as Schoolmaster,' for Arnold ruled like the Carlylean leader . . . 'He governed the school,' says Arthur Stanley, 'precisely on the same principles as he would have governed a great empire.'

Arnold, himself, monarch, priest and appellate judge, undertook to rule through the lieutenantancy of the Sixth—the highest Form . . . By this arrangement, Arnold sought, successfully, to channel bullying strength into a feudal protective nobility.<sup>20</sup>

Escott in the 'eighties wrote admiringly of this system:

This system is really one of government by the governed, and as perfected by Dr. Arnold, is the distinguishing feature of our public schools . . . it is part of education to learn to rule.<sup>21</sup>

To a pre-Hitler German the outstanding characteristic of this educational system was its successful authoritarianism.

. . . The boy placed betimes in a corporate life, is . . . trained to be a citizen rather than an individual. This close . . . association of young people, with its ready scorn for everything contrary to their own ideals, tends to transform the individual who might seek to rise above the type into the prominent representative of the community . . . Anything that does not fit into the spirit of the community is suppressed . . . In this atmosphere, the standard of values is not what the boy himself thinks good or bad, but what the community regards as right or wrong . . . To lead the community, not by bringing in new values and so transforming it, but by oneself becoming the embodiment of all that is lofty and ethical in the community, is the ideal of the English school. Throughout the system there exists no stimulus to individuality, to being in any respect distinct or different from one's surroundings . . . It is a type that everywhere rules men and knows them; despising any sort of problem as mere moonshine, and compels even the unwilling outsider to recognize its great relative efficiency.

. . . It is of incalculable worth for a nation to be governed by a dominant type, represented throughout all professions, of men who are bodily sound, full of energy, and animated by a reasonably limited idealism—and this type is trained by the boarding-school.<sup>22</sup>

The Universities are held to have done their part so long as they create and promote the type of man by whom the country desires to be governed . . . What is desired is that from them a broad current of aristocratic feeling should flow out to the nation, and so educate democracy in the British tradition.<sup>23</sup>

Matthew Arnold himself in his efforts at educating the nation out of its barbarism and Philistinism accepted the distinction between education for the few and education for the many:

Arnold wanted culture chiefly for the Philistines, whose function was to supply the country with brains. For the aristocracy, who had the more important function of governing, he put morals ahead of wisdom—so far, indeed, that he could write, with only a touch of irony, 'If Eton does not teach her pupils profound wisdom, we have Oxenstierna's word for it that the world is governed by very little wisdom.'<sup>24</sup>

On the other side of this authoritarian education we find the attitudes fostered by schools and colleges for the mass of the population. H. G. Wells has written of the schools created by the Act of 1870:

He [Geoffrey West, Wells' biographer] probably considers the National Schools were 'democratic' schools, like the common schools of the United States, 'all Class' schools, but that is a mistaken view. In spirit, form, and intention they were inferior schools, and to send one's children to them in those days, as my mother understood perfectly well, was a definite and final acceptance of social inferiority. The Education Act of 1870 was not an Act for a common universal education, it was an Act to educate the lower classes on lower-class lines, with specially trained, inferior teachers who had no university quality.<sup>25</sup>

Monitor teachers, the production-belt method of examination, 'payment by results'—these things did not affect the education of the wealthy, nor did they interfere with the maintenance of the 'distinction between ranks and classes'; they were definitely for the 'lower orders.'

This 'lower class' view of education for the majority of English children appeared constantly in the testimony before the various Educational Commissions of the 'eighties and 'nineties. The Ragged Schools were 'appropriate' for the 'Ragged classes.' The following is typical:

*Ques.* But if one's idea of education in England is that of a ladder, must there not be a point where the highest elementary



instruction melts into the lowest secondary instruction? *Ans.* If you take the natural capacity of the majority of children, and if you take the age at which they must go to labour, it is only a very few children that will emerge out of the elementary schools. For those undoubtedly you ought to make provision . . . Those children . . . are very few. I very much doubt whether there are 5 per cent of the children that go into elementary education, upon whom . . . secondary education would be well bestowed.\*

We have then this situation. The theory of liberalism—whether Morley's:

Respect for the dignity and worth of the individual is its root. It stands for the pursuit of social good against class interest or dynastic interest. It stands for the subjection to human judgment of all claims of external authority . . .<sup>26</sup>

or Mill's:

In proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others . . . [Liberalism demands] great energies guided by vigorous reason, and strong feelings strongly controlled by conscientious will . . .<sup>27</sup>

—this theory rested on the assumption that if individuals had adequate opportunities for development and adequate knowledge they would be 'reasonable' and that the operation of this reasonableness in society would produce social good. This was the assumption underlying Mill's *Liberty* and Arnold's belief in Culture. It required a basis of knowledge which could be translated into wisdom by which truth and error could be judged, and freedom of discussion for all, through which they could be tested. Its operation would have meant in education that every Englishman had access to all the knowledge he could use, that he could freely appraise this knowledge according to the best dictates of his own mind and spirit, that he could freely act upon it. The theory of liberalism called not for an authoritarian educa-

\* Testimony of Lord Lingen, K.C.B., before the Royal Commission on Elementary Education, 5 July 1887, *Third Report*, Vol. xxx, 1887. Cf. Ch. III, pp. 86-7 on the Ragged Schools.

tional system developing leaders and followers, but a system based on equality of opportunity for expanding individual freedom. It called furthermore not merely for indoctrination in ideas of freedom and equality but for the experience of freedom and equality in education.

But equality and freedom, either as concept or experience, were contrary to everything embodied in the various manifestations of British education. From Oxford and Cambridge to the Ragged School Union, whatever aim or function education had, it was at the opposite pole from developing a nation of individuals who could exercise responsible freedom. Aside from a few theorists like Mill, no one even had any intention of making the principle of liberalism apply to the whole nation, but only to a small minority—a ruling class. British education was a system of aristocratic class privilege, a system of checks and balances, cultivating ability to exercise authority in one class, and deference for authority in the other—a character structure of rulers and ruled. It stressed not the art of the free utilization of knowledge but the 'right ideas' taught in the universities through a curriculum founded on the classics and in the lower schools through a factory piece-work method of examinations.

The extension of the franchise made more imperative the kind of education implicitly demanded by the theory of liberalism. The democratic assumptions inherent in liberalism had to be taken more seriously. Ignorance and incapacity were now more than ever a political and economic hazard. The inadequacy of the kind of education that had developed haphazardly in England was more than ever apparent as liberal individualism was turning into political democracy and democracy was turning toward economic equality and collectivism.

Because of the discrepancies between the demands of English life and the education of the schools, the role of formal education in giving structure to new social values was slight. Aside from a few exceptional figures such as T. H. Green, the shaping of new ideas was not to be found in schools and universities. And yet, the function of education in breaking

ground for new values and in making them possible was important in at least four ways: in setting a precedent for state concern for the welfare of all the people; in increasing the number of literate persons with access to whatever basis for understanding information can give; in changes in curricula and methods which made way for new social functions of education; in providing an area of conflict in which the major issues of the time could be seen with peculiar clarity.

1. In taking direct responsibility for education, the State entered an area where it was hard for people committed to individual welfare and beginning to profess democracy to dispute the values involved.\* It was difficult to continue to maintain the position that ignorance was preferable to knowledge for the mass of the population. At the same time such state concern for welfare laid down a revolutionary precedent.

Escott pointed out this implication of the Act of 1870:

The Education Act of 1870 was not, like the Reform Act of 1867, a second installment of legislation of which the first-fruits had already been tasted; but . . . in its strangeness and novelty to the English people, it was absolutely revolutionary . . . it has signally interfered with the innate and traditional English love of personal independence, and . . . it has involved a heavy increase to the rates that Englishmen pay . . . No such organized intervention between parent and child, no such systematic inquisition into those private affairs which Englishmen are in the habit of keeping religiously to themselves, had ever been attempted in this country.<sup>28</sup>

The London School Board, brought into existence under the Act of 1870 and absorbed into a County Council Committee for the control of education under the Act of 1902,† gave a striking illustration during the three decades of its

\* Cobden had written in 1850, 'The Tories, whatever they may say to the contrary, are opposed to the enlightenment of the people. They are naturally so from an instinct of self-protection.' (John Morley, *Life of Richard Cobden*, Boston, Roberts, 1881, p. 352.)

† For the work of the London School Board during the thirty-odd years of its existence, see *Final Report of the School Board for London: 1870-1904*, London, P. S. King and Son, 1904.

existence of the problems and accomplishments of 'collectivist organization at public expense.' Booth described the Board as the only hopeful sign he saw in London, the high water mark of public conscience in England, the 'one force at work of which he is whole-heartedly admiring.'<sup>29</sup>

In less than twenty years between 1873 and 1890 the number of schools under the management of the Board increased from 138 to 404; the number of children in average attendance from 22,145 to 345,746; the number of teachers from 275 to 7,166. The average number of children in attendance per adult teacher dropped from 80.5 to 48.8.<sup>30</sup> The amount of money expended by the Board in the maintenance and operation of the schools increased from £428 in 1871 to £1,711,697 in 1890.<sup>31</sup> The operations of the School Board came to include not only maintenance of buildings, curriculum, and hiring and supervision of teachers in the regular day schools, but also special schools for defective children, industrial schools, continuation schools, playgrounds, physical education, health supervision, and relation to secondary schools. What the London School Board actually did was not to debate the theory of state concern for welfare but to give a striking example of it in action.

2. Democracy rests upon the assumption of a literate and an informed population. Public education did not give England a literate and informed people, but it did open the doors to such a situation, thus making a democratic welfare State a possibility.

Before the Education Act of 1870 only two-fifths of the children of the working classes between six and ten and one-third of those between ten and twelve were on the register of government-aided schools.\* By 1880 ten years of the Education Act had still not provided even elementary schools for all children, but substantial steps had been taken in that direction. In 1880, children of school age in London numbered 740,377. 'Voluntary' Church schools provided accommoda-

\* Smellie, *op. cit.* p. 166. In the middle of the century there were approximately 5,000,000 children between five and fifteen in England of whom slightly over half were in school. (*Census of Great Britain in 1851*, p. 65.)

tion for 269,469, and Board Schools under the Education Act accommodation for 225,236—a total of 494,705. The average attendance was 373,701, about half the juvenile population.<sup>82</sup> Between 1870 and 1890 the average school attendance in England rose from one and a quarter millions to four and a half millions, while the cost per child doubled.<sup>83</sup> A report published in 1888 showed the increase in the proportion of children enrolled in all elementary schools as compared with one-sixth of the population (probable ratio of school-age group to the entire population): 1870, 46 per cent; 1880, 92 per cent; 1886, 97 per cent.<sup>84</sup> By 1895 England had almost succeeded in providing a school place for every eligible child.<sup>85</sup> Illiteracy dropped from 25 per cent for men and 35 per cent for women in 1861 to approximately 20 per cent for men and 27 per cent for women for 1870-77; 13 per cent for men and 16 per cent for women in 1883; 11 per cent for men and 13 per cent for women in 1888.\* By 1893 it had dropped further to 5 per cent for men and 5.7 per cent for women. 'A condition of things in which everyone would read and write and do sums dawned on the startled imagination of mankind.'<sup>86</sup>

Increased literacy provided a basis for the realization of democracy and one means of breaking through class lines. The press quickly seized the opportunities offered by an enlarged public. Penny stamp duties on newspapers and the paper duty had been abolished; the *Morning Post*, which began its existence as a penny newspaper in 1772 but rose to 7d. in the early years of the century, became once more a penny newspaper in 1881. In 1882 the average circulation of the London daily newspapers was 44,969 (that of *The Times* being 100,000 and that of the *Telegraph* 250,000),<sup>87</sup> of Glasgow, 38,333, of Edinburgh, 30,000, while the daily papers of Manchester had the highest circulation in the United Kingdom. This meant that something like 3,981,000

\* Based upon the number of males and females making marks instead of signing their names in marriage registers. The figures are from the *Statesman's Year Book*.

copies of all papers were distributed daily in the United Kingdom.<sup>38</sup>

In 1883 *The Times* for the first time published a condensed *Summary* of Parliamentary proceedings, and during the Gladstone Government the press acquired an unprecedented influence which it was not to lose. The Liberal press was influential in forcing Mr. Gladstone to include Radicals in his Cabinet; Sir Charles Dilke had close relations with Mr. Hill, editor of the *Daily News*, and both Dilke and Chamberlain were allied with John Morley, who had just become editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The opposition of practically the entire press to Chamberlain's *Radical Programme* was an important factor in the public attitude toward Chamberlain and in his change of political affiliation.<sup>39</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* as edited by W. T. Stead was the most striking example of the new popular journalism. By 1885 it had risen from an average circulation of 8,360 when Stead took over the editorship, to 12,250.<sup>40</sup> It combined sensational news with the support of popular radical causes, 'the amelioration of the condition of the disinherited.' \* In 1890 an American journalist wrote of it:

Very soon Stead's personality became one of the controlling forces in English public life. Londoners . . . dislike very much to be told that Stead, between the years 1884 and 1888, came nearer to governing Great Britain than any other one man in the kingdom, but to the best of my observation and belief it is true . . . The paper became one which 'everybody' had to read—which nobody could afford to miss.<sup>41</sup>

The importance of the combination of compulsory education and cheap printing was apparent at the time. Escott commented:

. . . The extensive circulation of the daily and weekly news-sheets among the rural labourers of England and is one of the

\* Following 'Bloody Sunday' in 1887, Stead published a pamphlet, *Remember Trafalgar Square*. In the last of the 'eighties he was associated with Annie Besant in editing the half-penny weekly journal, *The Link* (Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1925, pp. 246, 251).

signs of the times. It is no longer the rector of the parish, the squire and the more important farmers, who receive daily the contemporary history of the world as recorded in the columns of the London or the larger provincial newspapers. These make their way into the smaller farmhouses and the wayside inns.<sup>42</sup>

Morley wrote of the periodicals of the time as only less significant than the daily press for the reading public:

A leading French writer, after laying it down that the *Encyclopédie* was the central book of the eighteenth century in France, and the writings of Port Royal as central in the seventeenth, bade us look in the nineteenth for the Reviews. That is to say, these are the . . . centres for the best observation of fresh flowing currents of thought, interest, and debate.<sup>43</sup>

The *Fortnightly*, the *Contemporary*, and the *Westminster* reviews held this place in England.

Increased zest for the printed word appeared likewise in the sale of books. In 1876 Jevons wrote of a sale of 8,000 copies of his *Logic Primer* in six months, and of 3,350 of his *Elementary Lessons* in the year.<sup>44</sup> In 1880, 572 copies of his *Deductive Logic* (printed in an edition of 1,500) sold in the month after publication, although only 800 or 900 copies of his *Elementary Lessons* had sold in the first two months at half the price.<sup>45</sup> Over 40,000 copies of Bellamy's *Looking Backward* were sold in England during the 'eighties and over 60,000 of *Progress and Poverty* in three years. Walter Besant's *Children of Gideon*, published in 1887, sold widely and was influential in bringing about action on women's working conditions and on sweated labor. The enormous sale of *Robert Elsmere* was another example of the avidity of the new reading public. Such a sale would have been impossible before 1870. Observers were impressed by the large sale of cheap standard books, whose originator, H. G. Bohn, died in 1884, and of new books on social questions. Probably the first of the long chain of 'Social Science Series' was that begun by Sonnenschein, under the editorship of Belfort Bax about 1885. In 1883, M. de Laveleye, analyzing the revival

of interest in socialism while living in the midst of it, recognized the crucial importance of literacy:

The great difference between the present situation and any analogous one of which history furnishes us with examples, is that the spread of Socialism is prodigiously favoured by education and the press. Instruction is offered to all, and even enforced, and all learn to read. Thus books, pamphlets, cheap newspapers, penetrate everywhere, spreading notions of radical reforms.<sup>46</sup>

The Act of 1870 had gone only a short way toward the realization of Huxley's ideal: 'I conceive it to be our duty to make a ladder from the gutter to the university along which any child may climb.'<sup>47</sup> But the year 1873 saw the beginning of the university-extension movement initiated by the University of Cambridge, to be followed by the London Society for the Extension in University Training in 1876 and by a similar Oxford society in 1878.<sup>48</sup> Some of these university extension centers grew into local colleges so that by the end of the decade there were centers of adult education in nearly every city in England. Such facilities for education figured largely in the training of labor leaders. Tom Mann wrote of his experience:

Thus, at the Midland Institute, at the Severn Street Institute, and elsewhere, classes on many subjects were available at very reasonable rates. Three evenings a week for five years I attended classes in connection with the Science and Art Department, South Kensington.<sup>49</sup>

The university extension movement was designed to meet two main needs: education for children and young people who had completed the elementary schools and for whom there was no further provision for education, and scientific and technical education. In regard to the first, Lord Randolph Churchill declared emphatically in a speech in 1890, suggestive of his son's words in 1943, that:

Only a very small percentage [of the hundreds and thousands of children capable of further educational development] were enabled to pursue further studies, and by far the larger number



were instantly thrown into the bitter struggle for existence . . . and losing what elementary knowledge they had acquired, they relapsed to a large extent into absolute ignorance; . . . and on account of it, they fell into poverty, and . . . too frequently . . . became the victims of disease and crime.<sup>50</sup>

In regard to the second, people as diverse as Lord Randolph Churchill, T. H. Huxley, Lord Hartington, and Alfred Marshall were agreed on the importance of special schools or institutes for scientific and technical training in order to meet the competition of foreign nations. In 1888, at the urging of Lord Hartington, an Act for Technical Education was passed enabling local municipal authorities to make large-scale provision for technical education, which in many cases was widely interpreted to mean any kind of secondary education. Eight years later the Technical Education Board of the London County Council was able to report that an elaborate scholarship system, especially for children whose parents' incomes were under £250 a year, brought secondary education within the reach of many children hitherto forced to work at an early age.

The idea that education and the good things of life should be available to all people appeared in the use of exhibits at evening schools and in annual exhibits of fisheries, health, art, and other phases of national life, as well as in the innovation of opening the National Gallery for the entire year at student rates.\*

3. Education affected new social values, further, through changes in the *kind of education* offered in English schools and universities. These curricular changes did not in themselves foster the philosophy characteristic of the end of the century, but by breaking up old molds of thought they helped to prepare the way for them. The various disparate educational ventures before 1870 presented a conglomerate picture, and reformers for the most part addressed themselves to one or another aspect of it rather than developing any general principles.

\* The National Gallery, founded in 1824, increased the number of its pictures between 1870 and 1890 by 50 per cent.

Criticism of the casual, impoverished intellectual life of the great universities had led to wider and more imaginative curricula and methods of teaching at both Oxford and Cambridge. Alfred Marshall had affirmed that the fact that teachers at Oxford and Cambridge were compelled to be in Holy Orders and 'generally looked forward to spending the second halves of their lives in country rectories, where learning would be of little use and science of no use,' hardly fitted them to place English intellectual training in a high position.<sup>51</sup> Although Marshall recognized no change in the 'organized torpor' of the universities during the nineteenth century, the last quarter did, nevertheless, see two new schools, Natural Science, and Law combined with Modern History, added to the traditional schools in the *Litterae Humaniores* and Mathematics at Oxford and similar schools with more definite specification in regard to content at Cambridge.\*

The Royal Commission on Universities of the early 'fifties, resulting in the Acts of 1854 and 1877, opened Oxford and Cambridge to the middle class enfranchised in 1832, and introduced more changes in thirty years than had taken place in any previous century.<sup>52</sup> The governing body of Oxford which had consisted solely of the heads of the Colleges with the two proctors was replaced by an elective body, on which heads of colleges, professors, and resident masters were equally represented; the number of professorships was increased. For the first time, a person unwilling to sign the Thirty-nine Articles could enter the university; finally, in 1871, religious tests for entrance to the universities were entirely abandoned, and in 1877 the obligation of the fellows

\* George Charles Brodick, *A History of the University of Oxford*, London, Longmans, Green, 1900, p. 194. Cf. James Bass Mullinger, *A History of the University of Cambridge*, London, Longmans, Green, 1888, for the changes in the two universities during the nineteenth century. The faculty at Oxford in 1886 included a Faculty of Theology, of Law, of Natural Science, including medicine, mathematics, and rural economy, and a Faculty of Arts, including the classics, English language, and literature, a good representation of Western European languages as well as of Oriental, philosophy, archaeology, history, both ancient and modern, and political economy.

to celibacy was abolished. In the last half of the century, moreover, examinations were offered to graduates of those schools 'which lie between the great Public Schools and the National Schools.'<sup>53</sup> These examinations for merit, called pointedly 'Middle Class Examinations,' attracted an increasing number of applicants. In 1858, 370 boys applied for them; in 1878, 3,916 boys and 2,480 girls; in 1887, 5,630 boys and 3,976 girls.

This had its effect on secondary schools. At the opening of the Oxford High School for Boys, T. H. Green pointed out the implications of the changes that were taking place:

Our high school . . . may fairly claim to be helping forward the time when every Oxford citizen will have open to him at least the precious companionship of the best books in his own language, and the knowledge to make him really independent; when all who have a special taste for learning will have open to them what has hitherto been unpleasantly called the 'education of gentlemen.' I confess to hoping for a time when that phrase will have lost its meaning, because the sort of education which alone makes the gentleman in any true sense will be within the reach of all.<sup>54</sup>

While the universities were being made more accessible through examinations in the classics, the curriculum in secondary schools was being widened in line with middle-class interests. In 1895 the Commissioners for Secondary Education reported:

Whole regions of knowledge, at one time scarcely thought of as falling within an educational curriculum, have been added . . . a place and a function have been found for modern languages and literature . . . certain physical sciences, [and] technical and manual instruction . . . *The idea of technical instruction as a means for the formation of citizens capable of producing or distributing wealth, has taken hold.* [Italics mine.]<sup>55</sup>

In 1890 a motion by the headmaster of Harrow at the annual Headmasters Conference that Greek not be a compulsory subject for the Oxford and Cambridge course was defeated by only ten votes.<sup>56</sup>

In the question of what should be taught, conflicting social values were being fought out in the schools. Marshall thought that problems of trade and Huxley thought that problems of democracy would be solved by giving everyone a technical and scientific education. To Matthew Arnold this meant the triumph of Philistinism and the psychology of the market over Culture. Each trend accentuated the other so that the advocates of the classics professed more antagonism to science than they felt and the scientists took on an additional blindness to the values of tradition. Men who followed Arnold were resistant to the valid claims of science because they feared that scientific training would reinforce the deification of practical intelligence, useful knowledge, and competitiveness by the middle class. This fear made Arnold himself, eagerly desirous as he was of reform in middle-class education, nevertheless lukewarm toward any changes in the secondary schools:

Change, he said, speaking of the work of the Public School Commission, would undoubtedly come at Eton; and this was a good thing, he added, in a tone calculated to discourage the most ardent revolutionist, since 'reform of an institution which trains so many of the rulers of this country is, no doubt, a matter of considerable importance.' <sup>57</sup>

It was the issue of extended franchise and the Caucus, the issue of the Church and Social Christianity once more: How far could the people share in the most cherished values of society? Could these values take into account every-day needs, without becoming so diluted that they were meaningless? Could values become 'common' without being debased? How far could the people be trusted?

The reformers who turned their attention to the curriculum and methods of the elementary schools met an entirely different situation. The lack of vigorous intellectual training of the old Oxford and Cambridge had been defended on the ground that the personal relation between tutor and student was of more value than learning. Whatever truth there is in this view had no place whatever in the ele-

mentary schools started by Bell and Lancaster. There the teacher was a minor factor in education. Knowledge was something to be poured into the pupils as expeditiously as possible under the 'monitorial system'; i.e. each class to be in charge of a picked boy or girl a little more advanced than the others. 'Any boy who can read can teach . . . although he knows nothing about it,' said Lancaster.<sup>58</sup> In these schools the things to be taught consisted largely of the three R's and even these were so badly taught that in 1862 a 'Revised Code' for elementary schools was demanded to remedy the situation. What the new code actually did was to stamp in the mechanical character of learning through the system of 'payment by results'; a teacher was paid according to the number of learned items his pupils were able to produce. 'The child became a money-earning unit to be driven; the teacher a sort of foreman whose business it was to keep his gang hard at work.'<sup>59</sup>

As late as 1887 the system of payment by results was still sufficiently widespread to be a subject of inquiry by the Royal Commission on Elementary Education:

Testimony of Robert Wild, Headmaster, Byron Street School under the London School Board, President of the National Union of Elementary Teachers:

*Ques.* What objections have you to the system of payment by results?—*Ans.* In the first place it prevents good teaching . . . it compels [the teacher] to work with an eye on the examination the whole year through, and not on the amount of education that he can give to the children.<sup>60</sup>

Testimony of Thomas Wilkinson, former headmaster at Harrow-on-the-Hill:

. . . I believe that the teaching latterly [under the system of payment by results] has been far more mechanical and less intelligent . . . I am judging now from the boys who have left me, say within the last 15 years, and those who left me within the previous 15 years.<sup>61</sup>

During the 'seventies and 'eighties other subjects than the three R's were being sporadically added to the elementary

curriculum—Science, Nature Study, History and Geography, Domestic Subjects, Vocational Subjects. A more varied curriculum made routine standardization even more difficult. Finally in 1890 the system of payment by results was abandoned and grants were made to depend on the number of children in average attendance, except for certain grants for special technical subjects.<sup>62</sup>

The significance of the changes in curriculum and method which were taking place in all branches of education lies primarily not in the gain or loss involved in any particular innovation. The educational issues between science and the classics, between vocational and 'liberal' education, or between 'training the mind' and 'developing the personality' were certainly not far advanced or clarified anywhere, or on any educational level, at this time. The point was that instead of its being taken for granted that education for a gentleman and a ruler was classics and games, and education for a child in the Ragged Schools drill in the three R's, the way was now open for consideration of what education might be and might do for individuals in a developing democracy.

Mill had looked forward to this sort of education:

Having said that individuality is the same thing with development, and that it is only the cultivation of individuality which produces, or can produce, well-developed human beings, I might here close the argument; for what more or better can be said of any condition of human affairs than that it brings human beings themselves nearer to the best thing they can be? or what worse can be said of any obstruction to good than that it prevents this? <sup>63</sup>

Huxley believed that he was beginning to see this education come into being:

The medieval view was that all knowledge worth having was explicitly or implicitly contained in various ancient writings; in the Scriptures, in the writings of the Greater Greeks, and those of the Christian Fathers. Whatever apparent novelty they put forward, was professedly obtained by deduction from ancient data.

The modern knows that . . . the ascertainable is infinitely greater than the ascertained, and that the chief business of the teacher is not so much to make scholars as to train pioneers \*

4. Education was influential in a fourth way as an area where the major issues of the time could be fought out with peculiar vigor. In what terms should education be viewed: Should it be appraised in terms of taxes or of literacy? Should the education of the child of a laborer be seen in terms of his parents' right to do what they would with their child, his own development, the cost to the State, or of his potential character as a citizen in a democracy? What should be the relation between religious and secular education? Is education in a democracy a necessity for all or a luxury for a few; and should education be different for the few than for the many? Is education wholly a matter of rational training of the mind or does it include other aspects of developing the individual? Is it a matter of imparting known facts and accepted doctrines or of 'training pioneers'?

All of these questions were involved in the controversies over education in the 'eighties, and as these questions of social values were thrashed out in the field of education, answers to some of them became increasingly clear. Since the London School Board was making one of the clearest demonstrations of the shift 'from a policy of retrenchment to a policy of education' the storm of opposition and support it involved is of especial importance.

Protests over the expense of education and over postponing the age of going to work attended every step it took:

In the present condition of the labour market, . . . and of the prevalence in this country of early and fruitful marriages, it appears to be very unwise to increase the existing pressure upon parents by preventing children of 10, who have reached a reasonable standard of proficiency, from beginning to contribute to their own support.<sup>64</sup>

\* From an undated draft of a speech probably in 1892. Leonard Huxley, *Life and Letters of T. H. Huxley*, New York, Appleton, 1901, Vol. II, pp. 329-30.

A pamphlet protesting the extravagance of the School Board in 1885 sold 96,000 copies in six weeks:

Up to the end of March, 1885, the total expenditure of the London School Board amounts to £14,943,206, 18s., 3d. . . . upwards of One Million Sterling of which has been shamefully squandered . . . a more disgraceful waste of the ratepayers' money could not be found in the annals of any public body.<sup>65</sup>

A *Labour Elector* handbook of 1888 took the opposite position in denouncing the indifference of the voters who should support the Board:

The triennial School Board Election shows . . . the apathy . . . of the vast majority of the electors . . . The revolution of 1870 has not yet had time to make its full effect and significance felt . . . Then again, the cause of Education, injured as it has been by the undignified jealousies of rival religionists, has been still further hampered by the pecuniary interests of the ruling classes, whom the industrial masses have, by their apathy, permitted to obtain control of the educational machine.<sup>66</sup>

No educational controversies in the 'eighties—or since—have settled these issues. But in this period the major contradictions which will have to be resolved in English education were defined; and certain over-simplified solutions to them were recognized as obsolete. Illiteracy was no longer tolerable in a democracy; conflict between the two was resolved in favor of democracy. The conflict between considering schools in terms of taxes and in terms of education was less easily resolved; but strong precedents were established for State expenditure for education widely interpreted as welfare for children. The conflict between democracy and a class-structured education remains, but changes introduced in the 'eighties made possible consideration of diversity in education according to variations among individuals rather than according to wealth.

■



## X. *Organization for Change*

FOR certain groups in England basic social change was not incidental to other purposes; it was the main business of life. Mill in saying that: 'The discussion that is now required is one that must go down to the very first principles of existing society,'<sup>1</sup> was anticipating what many and more insistent voices were saying ten or twenty years later. These active reformers were not content to trust to 'natural' processes of change; they saw England as a situation which demands change. They differed among themselves in the problems they stressed and in ways of dealing with them; they agreed in demanding, What is to be Done?

To the only avowed Marxist organization in England, the Social Democratic Federation, led by H. M. Hyndman—of the top-hat and frock-coat and revolutionary philosophy—social trends and problems grouped themselves easily under general categories. The Poor were not a group of individuals but a social phenomenon—wage slaves, the victims of exploitation. The depression was not a particular emergency calling for relief or legislation, but an inevitable manifestation of the internal contradictions of capitalism. Parliamentary democracy was a farce without economic revolution. Although separate reforms were included in the platform of the Federation, nevertheless land problems, inadequate housing, unemployment were basically not evils to be dealt with separately but inevitable manifestations of this particular stage of the class struggle. Nationalism and imperialism were evil offshoots of a vicious economy.

Karl Marx lived and wrote in England and based much of his analysis of historical materialism on British Blue Books,

but it was not until the formation of the Social Democratic Federation in 1881 that there was any clearly recognized support of his ideas in England. The International Workingmen's Association of the 'sixties and 'seventies had been both stronger and more committed to Marxist principles on the Continent than it was in England. It had been founded in London; Odger, an Englishman, was its first president, and forty-nine English unions including the strongest affiliated with it. But English delegates had a moderating influence on the meetings, and as the International became more committed to the 'abolition of wage-slavery' instead of higher wages, shorter hours, and education, the interest of English trade unionists waned. By 1871 it was no longer supported by any large group of English workers.<sup>2</sup> It was practically dissolved after the Hague meeting of 1872, and of the twenty English branches only one survived 1873.<sup>3</sup> British socialists of the 'eighties knew Marx first in German and French editions. *Capital* did not appear in English until 1886.

Hyndman was a business man and political journalist, a graduate of Eton and Cambridge, who never wholly lost his middle-class values. His light on the road to Damascus appeared in the form of a French edition of *Capital*, which he encountered in 1880 at the age of thirty-eight. His discovery of Marx resulted in an article, 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch,' which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* on 1 January 1881.

This article<sup>4</sup> is a symbol of contemporary confusions in its blend of various strains of thought. There was evangelical middle-class indignation:

The certainty of approaching trouble . . . and . . . schemes for the reorganization of society [of Fourier, Marx, etc.] . . . move vital masses of men to almost religious exasperation against their fellows . . .<sup>5</sup>

There was a gloss of Marxian tags:

The hand-to-mouth labourer has little to lose . . .<sup>6</sup>

These were mixed with old-style nineteenth-century liberal faith in social betterment through the tractability of the poor, the generosity of the rich, and progress:

Nor is there in England that envy of wealth which is to be found elsewhere . . . so long as . . . [the working classes] think they can see their way to what they want through constitutional means, they have no mind to try the subversionary doctrines of the Continental agitators.<sup>7</sup>

Hyndman even defined 'genuine communism,' as the principle

that the well-to-do should provide for the poor certain advantages whether they like to do so or not.<sup>8</sup>

His citations of municipal gas and water works as examples of 'communism' suggest Webb's optimistic account of the progress of 'socialism' at the end of the 'eighties.<sup>9</sup>

This gradualism was, however, almost immediately abandoned for a more revolutionary position. The *Nineteenth Century* article was followed by an appeal to Lord Beaconsfield to 'reorganize our entire Empire at home and abroad, replacing go-as-you-please by a resolute policy of general social improvement throughout Britain.'<sup>10</sup> Later in 1881, Hyndman published *England for All* \* and in the same year organized the Democratic Federation, which later became the Social Democratic Federation.

The Social Democratic Federation demanded social revolution. It took its stand on the principle that no great or permanent benefit to society can result until the payment of wages by one class to another ceases. Hence there was no use in working independently for any particular reform as important; each specific reform movement or incident was used as an occasion for agitation and propaganda for basic change.

\* H. M. Hyndman, *The Text-Book of Democracy: England for All*, London, E. W. Allen, 1881.

In *England for All* Hyndman set forth Marx's theories on surplus value and exploitation of labor, acknowledging only indebtedness 'to the work of a great thinker and original writer, which will, I trust, shortly be made accessible to the majority of my countrymen.' (Preface.)

This was true of the first conference at the Westminster Palace Hotel in June 1881,<sup>11</sup> and of the vigorous meeting opposing compulsory thrift and forced insurance in 1882, which was the official launching of the Democratic Federation. It was true of Hyndman's debate with Bradlaugh on 'Will Socialism benefit the English people?' in 1884 and of the conference which added the word 'Social' to the name 'Democratic Federation' in the same year. A pamphlet of the Federation in 1884 shows a reliance on a general revolutionary appeal to 'humanity':

Thus, then, based upon science and political economy, rejoicing with the beauty of an enfranchised art, with our social creed as our only religion—the scientific organization of labour, and the new brotherhood of man—we appeal to men and women of all classes.<sup>12</sup>

Hyndman's definition of socialism was also Webb's: 'It is an organized attempt to substitute an ordered co-operation for existence for the present anarchical competition for existence.'<sup>13</sup> But the method of the Federation was always one of head-on attack on capitalist society and demanding ultimates. Even when very specific next steps were included as part of the program—universal suffrage, triennial parliaments, equal electoral divisions, payment of members of Parliament, punishment of corruption and bribery in elections, abolition of the House of Lords, Home Rule for Ireland, self-government for colonies, nationalization of land \*—not much attention was paid to what the precise function of these limited next steps might be. The Federation 'drew up an extensive programme of reforms in order to deprecate it. Its annual conferences recommended palliative measures and . . . [yet

\* These demands, reminiscent of the Chartist and similar to Chamberlain's *Radical Programme* and to Fabian proposals, were included in the program at the forming of the Federation in 1881. The amplified program adopted in 1884 and in 1893 included additional specific demands, such as nationalization of public utilities, free education, and an eight-hour day, but these were always incidental to the major object of 'collective ownership of the means of production'.

members] were haunted by the fear that . . . [such measures] might postpone the revolution.' <sup>14</sup> The same oscillation between immediate and final goals affected the relation of the Federation to other reforming groups. There was always the question when a united front with other organizations might be a help in securing certain temporary objectives and when an obstacle to further goals. There was confusion about the relation between the eight-hour day and the 'abolition of wage slavery,' about who were 'our enemies' and who were friends or possible temporary allies.

It was this insistence on ultimates combined with confusion about the relation of immediates to ultimates that lay back of the denunciation by the Federation of the trade unions of the mid 'eighties as led by 'the most stodgy-brained, dull-witted, and slow-going time-servers in the country,' <sup>15</sup> and of its lukewarm support of the new unionism at the end of the decade. It explains, too, the fact that the Social Democratic Federation would support an independent Socialist candidate of their own against a Radical who was advocating the same measures, while, at the same time, they accepted 'Tory gold' from a Conservative source in 1885 for an election campaign. In the first case, they felt that Socialist aims would be compromised by support of a Radical advocating the same palliative measures; in the second, acceptance of Conservative funds was simply a means to Socialist ends.\*

Shaw's comment on the tactics of the 1885 election shows the attitude of other Socialist groups toward the methods of the Federation:

Now the idea that taking Tory money is worse than taking Liberal money is clearly a Liberal party idea and not a Social-Democratic one. In 1885 there was not the slightest excuse for regarding the Tory party as any more hostile to Socialism than the

\* 'The reason for keeping strictly independent is the fear that candidates may be led away by flattery, if not by money . . . Before any candidate begins his canvass, he must leave with the Federation committee his resignation of the office for which he is standing; the resignation to be handed in by the committee, if in their judgment he proves unfaithful to Socialist principles.' (Woods, *English Social Movements*, p. 42.)

Liberal party; and Mr. Hyndman's classical quotation '*Non olet*' . . . was a sufficient retort to the accusations of moral corruption which were levelled at him. But the Tory money job, as it was called, was none the less a huge mistake in tactics. Before it took place, the Federation loomed large in the imagination of the public and the political parties . . . The day after the election everyone knew that the Socialists were an absolutely negligible quantity there as far as voting power was concerned. They had presented the Tory party with 57 votes at a cost of about £8 apiece. What was worse, they had shocked London Radicalism, to which Tory money was an utter abomination. It is hard to say which cut the more foolish figure, the Tories who had spent their money for nothing, or the Socialists who had sacrificed their reputation for worse than nothing.<sup>16</sup>

Such labor leaders as Tom Mann and Kier Hardie, although both associated with the Social Democratic Federation, were critical of it for its hostility to existing labor organizations and its indifference to proposals for immediate reform. These men were, a few years later, the organizers of the Independent Labour Party. They were opposed in the mid 'eighties both by Hyndman and by John Burns, neither of whom ever went over to the Labour Party. Tom Mann described the conflict:

I took the opportunity to urge upon the branch the desirability of dealing more specifically with the eight-hours question, as . . . this would prove of permanent as well as immediate value . . . John Burns . . . at once expressed entire disapproval of what I proposed. He declared the time had passed for such trivial reforms as the eight-hour day, notwithstanding the fact that it was included among the palliative proposals of the S.D.F. Amid loud cheers he declared that the capitalist system was on its last legs, and that it was our duty to prepare at once to seize the whole of the means of production and wipe out the capitalists altogether . . . When the vote was taken, the attitude of Burns . . . was endorsed by an overwhelming majority . . .

. . . a group of us . . . decided that, while remaining active members of the branch of the S.D.F. we would independently form an 'Eight-hours League.'<sup>17</sup>

Mann believed that a more 'realistic' attitude on the part of the Federation could have made it the instrument of the political organization of labor:

[The policy of the Social Democratic Federation] antagonised trade unionists without drawing over any considerable percentage to the Socialist position. Herein Hyndman was essentially bourgeois, and lacked perspicacity . . . he boasted that he was not of the working class . . . I venture to believe that had the tactics been different . . . there would have been no necessity for the coming into existence of the Independent Labour Party.\*

Hyndman was more vocal than thoughtful. Shaw referred to 'the delightful sense of revolutionary heroics' of the Social Democratic Federation, and asserted that the revolutionary faith of the Social Democrat released him from many of the laborious activities of the practical reformer.†

The same explosive vigor and emphasis on sweeping assertion rather than on clarity which marked the aims and political tactics of the Federation appeared, also, in their propaganda. A book, *England for All*; a pamphlet, *Socialism Made Plain*; a magazine, *Justice*; public speaking; a mass meeting; stone throwing in Pall Mall—were all hopefully regarded as good propaganda, but with no consideration of good for what precise end and of appealing to just what group. These Social Democrats were clear on the necessity of revolution; they were clear on 'arousing the members' by another pamphlet or another mass meeting; but the gap between the mass meeting in West Ham next Thursday night

\* Mann, *Memoirs*, p. 58. In 1888 *The Labour Elector* referred to the Social Democratic Federation as the only genuine working-class organization in England: 'an organization which years ago was proud and respected, but which now . . . is flittering its time.' (*Labour Elector*, 1 November 1888)

Hutt, writing as a twentieth-century Marxist, says: 'The policy in regard to trade unionism . . . was the biggest crime of the Social Democratic Federation against the future of the workers' movement in this country . . . Unlike Engels they were blind to the positive potentialities of this highly organized mass of working men.' (Allen Hutt, *This Final Crisis*, London, Gollancz, 1935, pp. 98-9.)

† Elton, *op. cit.* p. 87. Elton points out that the Federation never found an answer to the question of force or no force in bringing in the revolution.

and the coming of the Revolution was colossal and the ways of bridging it were obscure.

This hopeful lack of consideration of the means to revolution was typified by the mass meeting in Trafalgar Square in February 1886, which in Hyndman's view might have been either just another mass meeting or the dawn of the revolution. The Federation was staging a rival demonstration to a meeting of the Fair Trade League and a small organization, the Labourers' League:

In the early afternoon a vast throng was assembled in the Square and John Burns had begun to address it . . . The majority of it, no doubt, was from the submerged thirty per cent . . . The stone platform around which the meeting surged was forbidden ground and after a while the police succeeded in clearing it. This struggle had centred round John Burns, who was now seen to be waving a red flag, and who reappeared almost immediately in front of the National Gallery . . . and resumed his impassioned harangue . . . the word 'revolution' was heard ominously recurrent. Champion followed him . . . and after him . . . Williams. Then Hyndman climbed upon the parapet. It seemed to him that, if this was not the Day, it was at least a rehearsal of it. Suppose one were to give the word for a rising? But—a rising against whom? Against the police? Against the troops who would no doubt presently appear armed with ball cartridge? . . . And after that—if there should be an after that? The Government Offices? 'We assume control in the name of the people'? A committee of Public Safety—Hyndman, Champion, Burrows, Quelch . . . ? A telegram to the Commander in Chief? . . . No. one must be better prepared than this. Obviously, it all needed more thinking out. Obviously too, however, the present moment must be seized. A rehearsal for the people; a warning to the rich. One would see . . . He began. *If the thousands there had the courage of the few they would very soon alter the existing system. If only they would not go away from meetings like this and forget all that they had heard . . . Better to die fighting than to die starving . . . How many would follow the Socialist leaders?* Many hands went up. 'When we give the word for a rising will you join us?'

The police meanwhile had suggested to Hyndman that, if there were not to be ugly doings in the Square, he should lead



his audience to Hyde Park. Hyndman agreed. He would march at the head of a mob through the West end . . . The crowd made for Pall Mall amidst confused cries. Burns at its head still waved the red flag . . . In a few moments there were no window-panes in the windows of the Carlton. The crowd surged on . . . Not long afterwards John Burns was tramping solitarily eastward, with twopence in his pocket, to renew his search for work. He no longer carried a red flag. He was obviously but one more unemployed mechanic. Nobody looked twice at him . . .

. . . To Britain it seemed already all but a revolution . . . Angry old men who remembered the Chartist days talked wistfully of how artillery had been massed then to sweep the Mall . . . Yet the Mansion House Fund [for relief of the unemployed], which had long lingered, half-moribund at about £3,000 rose in the four days after the riot to £20,000. Another five days and this figure had been more than doubled. A fortnight after the window-breaking it had passed £60,000 and was still mounting. 'It is deplorable to reflect' said the *Times*, 'on the inferences that may be drawn however unwarrantably from this sudden expansion.' . . .

The Federation enjoyed now for a brief while a unique opportunity of forcing its proposals upon the notice of a hitherto inattentive world . . . Unfortunately . . . they raised no issue at once revolutionary and immediately practical round which discontent could crystallise.<sup>18</sup>

But what the creed of the Federation lacked in concreteness and clarity it made up in emphasis. No quarter was given to members who dissented. Insistence on dogmatic authoritarian doctrine inevitably brought a series of schisms in the Federation. At the end of 1884 William Morris, with Walter Crane, Belfort Bax, Eleanor Marx, and others, seceded to form the Socialist League. Even earlier Shaw and others who later formed the Fabian Society had withdrawn from association with the Federation. A few years later H. H. Champion, whose money and enthusiastic energy were at the disposal of the Federation for several years, was expelled for deviations and turned his efforts to the publication of the *Labour Elector*. The history of the Federation was a history of Hyndman's uncompromising insistence that

he was upholding the one true cause, while he continually engaged in factional fights over doctrinal and temperamental differences with Marx and Engels,\* on the one hand, and with a series of devoted, and later seceding, members on the other.

But it is neither adequate nor accurate to summarize the impact of the Social Democratic Federation on the changes of the 'eighties as a series of personal demonstrations on the part of Hyndman and a few associates, which created only a brief flurry in London, and then died down leaving British socialism to follow more 'characteristic' British lines. This appraisal of Beer, Webb, and Elton is greatly over-simplified.

It is true that the Federation could never count its following in large numbers. Hyndman, writing thirty years later, believed that had it not been for the splitting off of the Socialist League under Morris's influence, the Federation would have had direct influence on labor, and 'the Labour Party would never have existed as a virtually subsided wing of the Liberal Party.'<sup>19</sup> But for whatever cause—internal dissension, too revolutionary a program to attract British workers at that period, confused policies, or hostility to trade unions—the measurable results of the work of the Federation could not be called anything but meagre. In 1885 it had only seventeen branches, and few of them numbered as many as fifty members; in 1887 after four years of vigorous propaganda, the total membership was only 689.<sup>20</sup> On the wave of enthusiasm following the dock strike and the rise of the new unionism the Federation increased its membership to 5,000 in 1894, 9,000 by 1900, and 12,000 in the next few years.<sup>21</sup> In 1885 John Burns was the only one of the three Social Democratic Federation candidates in the general election who made any real impression—with 598 votes. In London the two candidates, Williams and Fielding, polled only 27 and 32 votes respectively.

The pamphlet *Socialism Made Plain* eventually sold 100,-

\* Hyndman talked much with Marx and Engels in 1880 and early in 1881. After the publication of *England for All*, based on Marxian ideas but making only a cryptic acknowledgment to Marx, Marx and Engels repudiated him.

ooo copies, and *England for All* became a point of reference in discussion of social questions. John Rae in his discussion of Socialism referred to it as the best source on Marxism in English;<sup>22</sup> Lord Randolph Churchill and Chamberlain both acknowledged its influence.<sup>23</sup> *Justice*, for which Morris, Shaw, and Edward Carpenter wrote for a time, was never able to sustain a continuous appeal. Hyndman himself said of it three decades later:

[It was] the most unfortunate undertaking for myself personally that I ever entered upon, and when I think of all the ability and energy and sacrifice which others as well as myself have thrown into *Justice* during the past twenty-seven years I am bound to recognize that invaluable service as the paper has rendered at times, we should have done far better to have expended our money and enthusiasm in other directions . . . . We did not meet a long-felt want, that's certain.<sup>24</sup>

But, although small in numbers and in direct influence, scorned by friends of Marx as 'adventurers,'\* dismissed by Sidney Webb as having 'very small influence—not adapted to England,' the Social Democratic Federation nevertheless did leave its mark on English social values in several important ways.

1. It held persistently before the people the problems of poverty and unemployment. It gave these problems an insistent revolutionary phrasing so that they could not be lightly dismissed as temporary or unimportant. It accustomed people to think of them in new words and symbols instead of the familiar natural-law individual-responsibility phrasing of nineteenth-century liberalism.

2. The 'agitation' of the Federation did much to stimulate investigation of the actual condition of the people of England resulting in the *facts*—about poverty, sweating, housing,

\* Letter of Engels to Sorge, 17 September 1886, 'Unpublished Letters of Marx and Engels to Americans,' *Science and Society*, Summer 1938, Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 348-75. Seven years later Engels wrote 'The Social Democratic Federation has actually deposed Mr. Hyndman; he is allowed to grumble and complain a bit about international politics here and there in *Justice*, but he is finished—his own people have found him out.' (Letter to Sorge, 18 March 1893, *ibid.* p. 371.)

health, the operation of the Poor Law—which roused people outside the small group of reformers to feel that Something Must Be Done. An investigation was undertaken by the Federation in order to discover what proportion of London workers received wages too low to allow them to maintain a minimum standard of health. The investigators concluded that 25 per cent had wages on which it was quite impossible for them to live decently. It was in order to refute this supposed exaggeration that Charles Booth undertook his monumental investigation which resulted in the conclusion that not a quarter but a third of the population of London was living under such conditions of extreme poverty.<sup>25</sup> A whole literature of opposition, of which the most notable example was Giffen's *The Progress of the Working Classes in the Last Half-Century*, was also prompted by this work of the Federation. The net result was more knowledge and more public awareness of the conditions of poverty.

3. Although never directly supporting, and sometimes even opposing, the new unionism, the Federation was nevertheless influential in bringing it about. Woods goes so far as to say:

The new trade unions are the offspring of the Social Democratic Federation. This is none the less so though the leaders of the New Unionism were rejected by their brethren of the Federation. John Burns says that he tries to have a Socialist for secretary of a branch union whenever it is possible.<sup>26</sup>

4. In the same way the Federation was a vital factor in giving rise to the Independent Labour Party.

The Labour Party would in due course be born of the Independent Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party having been made possible by the 'new' Trade Unionism: and the new Trade Unionism was first built up by four working men, Will Thorne, Tom Mann, John Burns, and Ben Tillet, three of them already members of the Federation, and the fourth speedily converted to its doctrines by his three fellow-leaders and his Trade Union experience.<sup>27</sup>

5. It was influential in bringing the London County Council into existence,\* although the Council was one example of Hyndman's feeling of his good work turned to base ends:

We, of course, wanted a great deal more from a Metropolitan Council than its Radical advocates would be satisfied with, and in my pamphlet entitled a *Commune for Land* I endeavoured to give these wider views of what might be done for our great city . . . [It is] sad to see how nearly twenty years later nearly all we did has been turned to the advantage of the well-to-do, the interests of the poorer districts being almost entirely neglected. The housing question in particular has been dealt with in a farcical manner.<sup>28</sup>

6. The work of the Federation showed that 'respectable' people could be vitally concerned about social conditions and could 'agitate.' Belfort Bax broke with Hyndman, but he acknowledged his influence. Others, like Bax, left Hyndman and the Federation in discouragement and anger, but they carried on to other work and organizations the sense of the urgency of social problems and necessity for vigorous dealing with them which some of them had first caught from Hyndman. Shaw became a Fabian, but he had first known Hyndman. Morris attempted to carry some of the Federation's aims into the Socialist League and Champion into the *Labour Elector*.

Starting to write of the Socialist League one finds oneself instead writing of William Morris. And it is with a feeling of kinship that we read today Morris's statement written on New Year's Day 1880:

I am in rather a discouraged mood, and the whole thing seems almost too tangled to see through and too heavy to move. Happily though I am not bound either to see through it or more it but a very little way: meantime I do know what I love and what

\* Cf. Ch. v, pp. 169-74.

I hate, and believe that neither the love nor the hatred are matters of accident or whim.<sup>29</sup>

It was undoubtedly his desire to move the weight of misery and ugliness as vigorously as one man could which first drew him to Hyndman and Hyndman's methods of uncompromising attack. He himself was as uncompromising in social reform as in art. He wrote:

Be careful to eschew all vagueness. It is better to be caught out in going wrong when you have had a definite purpose, than to shuffle and slur so that people can't blame you because they don't know what you are at. Hold fast to distinct form in art. Don't think too much of style, but set yourself to get out of you what you think beautiful, and express it . . . distinctly and without vagueness . . . Don't begin by slobbering and messing about in the hope that something may come out of it.<sup>30</sup>

And it was undoubtedly his sense of Hyndman's own vagueness of aim which led to the break between them and to the formation of the Socialist League.\* Morris's comment on the Trafalgar Square 'riot' in 1887 published in *Commonweal*, the League organ, is significant:

I should like to say a few words with the utmost seriousness . . . on the policy of the Socialist League. I have said that we have been overtaken unprepared, by a revolutionary incident, but that incident was practically aimless. This kind of thing is what many of us have dreaded from the first . . . At the risk of being misunderstood by hot-heads, I say that our business is more than ever *Education* . . .

Let me ask our comrades to picture to themselves the consequences of an aimless revolt unexpectedly successful for the time

\* On the personal factors involved, see J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, London, Longmans, Green, 1899, Vol. II, pp. 128 ff., and Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life*, pp. 328-30.

Hyndman believed that the dissensions which led to the break in the Social Democratic Federation were rooted in malicious personal gossip and that the founding of this independent organization was unnecessary on the basis of differences in belief and highly unfortunate for the socialist movement. It 'set the movement back fully twenty years and gave the opportunity for the commencement of that very course of compromise and political intrigue in the Socialist movement which Morris himself was most anxious to avoid.' (Ibid.)

. . . What would be the result unless the people had some definite aim, however limited?

The men . . . floated to the surface would be powerless, their attempts at legislation would be misunderstood, disappointment and fresh discontent would follow, and the counter-revolution would sweep them away at once.

Education towards Revolution seems to me to express in three words what our policy should be . . .<sup>31</sup>

Morris's quarrel with Hyndman concerned the vagueness of his aims, not their extreme revolutionary character. He followed Marx at least as closely as Hyndman did in believing that a complete overthrow of the existing economic relationships of society was necessary. Morris and Bax did not use the term, 'withering away of the State,' but they discussed the disappearance of the three functions of the State: (1) political functions to be taken over by local political bodies, (2) industrial functions to be taken over by agencies independent of localities, (3) international affairs since they are wielded by capitalistic agencies to disappear with the disappearance of capitalism. 'The State would simply die out with nothing left to do.' The new society would be built on the foundations of freedom and co-operation; it would deal with the administration of things, not persons. The fiction of the State would probably die out for want of material.<sup>32</sup> Morris wrote:

I know . . . by my own feelings and desires what these men want, what would have saved them from this lowest depth of savagery; employment which would foster their self-respect and win the praise and sympathy of their fellows, and dwellings which they could come to with pleasure, surroundings which would soothe and elevate them; reasonable labour, reasonable rest.<sup>33</sup>

Morris was more skeptical than Hyndman of the value of Parliamentary action:

You know well what happens to these men, the vast army of workers: the factory door is shut on them . . . what we don't know, or don't choose to know is that this reserve army of la-

bour is an absolute necessity for commercial war; if *our* manufacturers had not got these poor devils whom they could draft on to their machines when the demand swelled, other manufacturers in France, or Germany, or America would step in and take the market from them.<sup>84</sup>

You cannot have profit-making without competition, individual, corporate, and national, but you may work for a livelihood without competing; you may combine instead of competing.

I have said war was the life-breath of the profit-makers; in like manner, combination is the life of the workers.<sup>85</sup>

Suppose the Democratic party peaceably successful on this new basis of semi-State Socialism, what would it all mean? Attempts to balance the two classes whose interests are opposed to each other, a mere ignoring of this antagonism which has led us through so many centuries to where we are now, and then, after a period of disappointment and disaster, the naked conflict once more, a revolution made, and another immediately necessary on the morrow . . .<sup>86</sup>

It is Peace . . . which we need in order that we may live and work in hope and with pleasure . . .

It may be that the best we can hope to see is that struggle getting sharper and bitterer day by day, until it breaks out openly at last into slaughter of men by actual warfare instead of the slower and crueller methods of 'peaceful' commerce.<sup>87</sup>

Morris and Bax had the idea that the various branches of the Socialist League might be turned into a federation of socialist societies analogous to the Jacobin Clubs of the French Revolution which would educate and organize the working classes. Bax subsequently believed that it was this complete abandonment of political action which led to the control of the League by the Anarchists at the end of the decade.<sup>88</sup>

Engels denounced the Socialist League as 'faddists and emotional socialists,'<sup>89</sup> and it is true that Morris's socialism stressing art as much as economics had a limited appeal to British workingmen of the 'fact'-seeking 'eighties, and that by the end of the decade it had practically ceased to exist. But although the League itself was little more than a pic-



turesque variant of the Social Democratic Federation adding a touch of glamor to the socialist movement, the work of Morris and Bax had more independent impact.<sup>40</sup> In trying to discover what in the socialism of the 'eighties still offers a guide to the future it is frequently to Morris that one turns.

H. G. Wells has said that by the 'nineties English socialism was Fabianism; nothing else counted. It was a characteristic product of the 'eighties, and the socialism of the Webbs left a far clearer mark on the next fifty years than the socialism of Hyndman or of Morris. Some of the early Fabians began as members of the Social Democratic Federation; others came from Thomas Davidson's Fellowship of the New Life. But the Fabian Society soon acquired a distinct character of its own.

In the early days the Fabian Society was no less revolutionary than the Social Democratic Federation. Shaw set its early tone and later recalled it:

The Fabians are associated for spreading the following opinions held by them and discussing their practical consequences.

That under existing circumstances wealth cannot be enjoyed without dishonour or foregone without misery . . .

That a life interest in the Land and Capital of the nation is the birthright of every individual born within its confines . . .

That the established government has no more right to call itself the state than the smoke of London has to call itself the weather.

That we had rather face a civil war than such another century of suffering as the present one has been.<sup>41</sup>

The Fabian Society was warlike in its origin: it came into existence through a schism in an earlier society for the peaceful regeneration of the race by the cultivation of perfection of individual character. Certain members . . . modestly feeling that the revolution would have to wait an unreasonably long time if postponed until they personally had attained perfection, set up the banner of Socialism militant; seceded from the regen-

erators; and established themselves independently as the Fabian Society . . .

. . . we denounced the capitalists as thieves at the Industrial Remuneration Conference, and among ourselves, talked revolution, anarchism, labour notes *versus* pass-books, and all the rest of it, on the tacit assumption that the object of our campaign, with its watch-words, 'Educate, Agitate, Organize,' was to bring about a tremendous smash-up of existing society, to be succeeded by complete Socialism.<sup>42</sup>

But, as it developed, under the inspiration of Shaw, essentially an artist who said that economics served him as anatomy served Michelangelo, and the guidance of Sidney Webb, essentially a social technician, the Fabian Society came to represent the antithesis of the Federation. It became the symbol of social democracy, of gradualism, of peaceful permeation, of avoidance of revolution. Where the Federation was flamboyant the Society was precise; in contrast to the uncompromising ultimates of the Federation, the Society made a virtue of compromise and of the ultimate value of immediate next steps.

If the central unresolved conflict in Shaw's thinking was that between the Saint and the practical man of affairs,<sup>43</sup> the Fabian Society was for him the place where the man of practical efficiency could work in the name of the Saint. Webb defined socialism as the adoption, in industrial as well as in political matters, of the collective self-government of the community as a whole. This control by the community organized on a democratic basis was to be substituted for the individual control over other men's lives which 'the unrestrained private ownership of land and industrial capital inevitably involves.' The 'collective decision of the nation as a whole' was to replace 'the personal power of the owners of land and industrial capital.' Socialism he regarded as the *application* of representative democracy to all the industrial conditions of the worker's life.<sup>44</sup>

This meant that to the Fabians not only the material conditions of English life but each separate item of them represented a situation about which 'something must be done.'

'The Fabian Society,' said Webb, 'investigates *the particular evils* of society, and seeks a remedy *for each* in accordance with the principles of Socialism.' \* The 'principles of socialism' were 'a plan for securing equal rights and opportunities for all.' †

In his *Socialism in England*, published in 1889, Webb listed a series of specific Fabian proposals, which included those of the Social Democratic Federation, as well as the earlier demands of the Chartists. They were based on the 'scientific fact-finding' of the British intellectuals, and they constituted demands for definite next steps in 'Parliamentary and municipal socialism':<sup>45</sup>

#### EDUCATIONAL REFORM

To enable all, even the poorest, children to obtain not merely some, but the best education they are capable of.

#### REORGANIZATION OF POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION

To provide generously and without stigma for the aged, the sick, and those destitute through temporary want of employment, without relaxing the 'tests' against the endowment of able-bodied idleness . . .

#### EXTENSION OF MUNICIPAL ACTIVITY

The gradual public organization of labour for all public purposes, and the elimination of the private capitalist and middle-man . . .

#### AMENDMENT OF POLITICAL MACHINERY

To obtain the most accurate representation and expression of the desires of the majority of the people at every moment.

Since they were concerned with 'the particular evils of society,' the Fabians found any socialist formula inadequate to cover poverty, depression, unemployment, bad housing, and the redistribution of property. Instead, each of these

\* Webb, *Socialism*, p. 10. [Italics mine]

† Fabian Tract, No. 13, *The Basis of the Fabian Society*. Printed at the end of Tract 7 and subsequent tracts, it is stated that the Fabian Society aimed: 'at the reorganization of Society—by the emancipation of Land and Industrial Capital from individual and class ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit.'

terms represented a social problem about which all relevant facts must be scientifically collected and classified, and which could be solved, not by an enveloping philosophical theory, but by a detailed program of action. The 'reorganization of Society' might be stated as the basis of the Fabian program, but reorganized society could not be attained in a bound; it was something to be built by accretion, slowly to be engineered through every available means the present situation offered.

The Fabians were concerned not with 'the Poor' but with 'Poverty'—a noxious phenomenon to be examined, analyzed, and dissipated. The depression was an incident in a long economic process, arising from relatively simple causes which could be discovered through the accumulation of facts, admitting of relatively simple analysis, and leading to results which could be manipulated to a better end. 'Progress' and 'Prosperity' were not exactly taken for granted in the eighteenth century or in the nineteenth century, liberal fashion, but neither were they questioned. Material advance could be relied upon if the stupidities of men did not interfere with it. To the Fabians there were no major problems of human existence not readily susceptible of solution by expert intelligence. The problems of society were problems of engineering and administration. What was needed was adjustment by deft Fabian hands.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb separately and together are greater than this suggests. When one considers what has been achieved by the combination of his great knowledge and her ardent effort and insight, qualification seems graceless. In *Soviet Communism* the Webbs show not only amazing vitality and adaptability, but a warmth and imaginative richness, not often found in their earlier work. But even in this product of their later years there is a tendency to find final answers in administrative arrangements and to by-pass profound issues by definition. *Industrial Democracy* remains in many ways the book most characteristic of the Webbs and most illuminating in regard to their ways of thought. In the 1897 Preface they state that:

Sociology, like all other sciences, can advance only upon the basis of a precise observation of actual facts . . . we have sought to make our description quantitative . . . The primary task [is] to observe and dissect facts . . . [There is] danger in having a single hypothesis or far-reaching theories because these cannot be tested by facts . . . That nation will achieve the greatest success in the world struggle, whose investigators discover the greatest body of scientific truth, and whose practical men are most prompt in their application of it.<sup>46</sup>

One closes this book with a sense of having been present at an amazing, if somewhat singular, sleight-of-hand performance. Industrial democracy has been reduced to the operations of trade unionism. These operations can be counted. Psychology is a matter of the origin of trade-union regulations. Bold hypotheses, Marxian or any other, are handicaps to be counteracted by multiplying and testing them. The problems of industrial democracy are not problems of freedom and hope and frustration in an industrial society and of how group planning can serve and be served by individual desires, but of the optimum number of members on a trade-union board and whether trade unions shall be centrally or locally administered.

The attitude of the Fabian Society toward democracy arises from this general orientation. Democracy is an *instrument* which can be used for the attainment of socialism. This view of democracy appears clearly in the *Report on Fabian Policy* in 1896:

Socialism as understood by the Fabian Society means the organisation and conduct of the necessary industries of the country, and the appropriation of all forms of economic rent of land and capital by the nation as a whole, through the most suitable public authority . . . *The difficulty in England is not to get more political power for the people but to persuade them to make use of the political power they have.*

The Fabian Society does not put Socialism forward as a panacea for the ills of human society, but only for those produced by defective organisation of industry and by a radically bad distribution of wealth.<sup>47</sup>

Webb believed that in the politically democratic State of the 'eighties the workers could use the State to make the livelihood of the people independent of private capital. The Fabians sought to divert some of the abounding prosperity of the country to those who did not share its benefits; their creed was built upon faith in the limitless power of democratic processes. The people of England were groups of individuals capable of intelligent action once they knew the facts. The Fabians, like Robert Owen, believed that the character of man cannot be changed by appeals. They held, with Marx, that socialism is the inevitable outcome of social evolution; but believed that, if people were enlightened on the nature of one evil after another, it could be achieved without class struggle through the use of existing democratic machinery.

Solutions of specific problems in the direction of collectivism required time, but presented no insuperable difficulties. Fabians drew inferences from ascertained facts, laid emphasis on action rather than on terminology, tested by results rather than by theory, advocated certain specific changes in the social order, and held their theories not rigidly but as developing in practice. 'There never has been a Fabian orthodoxy, because no one was in a position to assert what the true faith was. They applied the method of social engineering to questions hitherto left to the realm of sentiment.' <sup>48</sup> There was no principle of administration except efficiency. In their own words, the 'socialist agitator had given way to the socialist investigator.' 'From 1889 onward, the chief efforts of the British Socialist Movement have been directed, not to bringing about any sudden, complete, or simultaneous revolution, but to impregnating all the existing forces of society with Collectivist ideals and Collectivist principles.' <sup>49</sup>

They could work with existing forces because, in contrast to the Conservative view that 'organic change' is to be avoided, the Fabians held that change was on their side; their aim was to work with it, to guide change by intelligence. Shaw wrote:

Letting things alone is now called letting them slide: an admission that they will not stay where they are. Change is a law of nature; and when parliaments neglect it and Churches try to ignore it, the effect is not to avert the changes but to make them hasty, ill-considered, and often catastrophic.<sup>50</sup>

The truth is that things change much faster and more dangerously when they are let alone than when they are carefully looked after.<sup>51</sup>

The Fabian Society looked to no particular group for support but worked through any group that would listen and follow; any political party, individual statesman, or mechanism of government might be an instrument to Fabian ends:

[The Society] brings all the pressure and persuasion in its power to bear on existing forces, caring nothing by what name any party calls itself or what principles, Socialism or other, it professes, but having regard solely to the tendency of its actions, supporting those which make for Socialism and Democracy, and opposing those which are reactionary . . .

It does not ask the English people to join the Fabian Society. It urges its members to join other Societies—Socialist or non-Socialist in which Fabian work can be done.<sup>52</sup>

As a result of this policy, the Fabians discarded such phrases as 'abolition of the wage system' and 'overthrow of capital,' which they had used in their earliest days, and went to work with their methods of permeation and opportunism. The principles and aims of the Social Democratic Federation dictated no method of attaining them. In the case of the Fabians it is hard to separate principles from methods; their principles were a method. The question was always: Yes, but how shall it be done?

Working with no particular group or class meant that the Fabians did not seek or get strong working-class support. The Social Democratic Federation had a large percentage of working-class members. The Fabian Society remained middle class through and through.

The results of the work of the Fabians measured in their

own terms was impressive. Since they so completely represented the trends of the time they were sometimes inclined to mistake other manifestations of these same trends for Fabian leadership. R. C. K. Ensor believes that the Fabians overestimated the extent of their influence in changes which would have taken place in any case, as for example, in the work of the London County Council. The direction of change would not have been different without the Fabians. But it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the extent and precise character of change was more their work than that of any other single group. Their bitterest critics are forced to pay tribute to the way that a group of intelligent and devoted persons in the course of fifty years were able to educate their countrymen on social conditions and actually to make permanent differences in the condition of the people.

Not only Laski and Cole and Tawney, but even Chesterton acknowledges their work:

I have in my time had my fling at the Fabian Society, at the pedantry of schemes, and the arrogance of experts, nor do I regret it now. But when I remember that other world against which it reared its bourgeois banners of cleanliness and common sense, I will not end . . . without doing it decent honor. Give me the drain pipes of the Fabian Society rather than the panpipes of the later poets . . . And if I feel such a confession to be due to those Fabians who could hardly have been anything but experts in any society, such as Sidney Webb . . . it is due yet more strongly to the greatest of the Fabian Society.<sup>53</sup>

The Fabians were practical educators. They were never interested in building the Fabian Society, and the fact that they never numbered over 3,000 members is no indication of the extent to which they molded public opinion and events. More significant is the wide distribution of Fabian publications. By 1915, 46,000 copies of the *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, first published in 1889, had been sold in English editions alone, and there have been numerous editions in



this country as well as translations on the Continent.\* When in 1894 *Fabian Essays* had sold 30,000 copies, it was reported as having the largest sale of any purely economic work except *Progress and Poverty*.

*Fabian Facts* appeared at critical points. The development of local government illustrates Fabian influence. The Fabian Society was instrumental in promoting the Local Government Act of 1888, and members of the Society were active on the London County Council. But this was not enough. In 1894 the Local Government or Parish Councils Act was passed, but people were ignorant of its operation. Immediately Tract 53, *The Parish Councils Act: What It Is and How to Work It*, appeared. This was the first time that a new act of Parliament had been published at a penny, and over 30,000 copies were sold in five months. The following year it was republished as *Parish and District Councils: What They Are and What They Can Do*. This Tract offered information on obscure points in the law, and for many years hardly a week passed without a letter from some village asking the Society for information on housing, the duties of councils, or the qualifications of candidates. The matter did not drop. In 1894 Tract 56 sharpened the issues involved in the working of the law by *Questions for Parish Council Candidates*. Still the Act was not wholly satisfactory in its working and needed extension. In 1895 appeared Tract 63, *Parish Council Cottages and How to Get Them*, and the *Annual Report* of the next year states, 'This leaflet is the only existing publication on the subject. One edition of 10,000 has been circulated; another is already in the press.' † Five years

\* *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, by G. Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, William Clarke, Sir Sydney Olivier, Annie Besant, Graham Wallas, Hubert Bland, London, Fabian Society, 1889.

See Pease, op. cit. pp. 88 ff. Webb's Introduction to the 1920 Edition of the *Essays*, and the *Annual Reports*, for discussion of their popularity. They were the first exposition of Fabian Socialism in England.

† *Annual Report*, 1896. This leaflet gave rise to a bill embodying amendments to the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890. No labor program or no suggested legislation was without benefit of Fabian analysis and recommendation. Tract 64, *How to Win and How to Lose An Election* and Tract

later the Society reported the progress of the Act in Tract 105, *Five Years' Fruit of the Parish Councils Act*, revised in 1906 to *Parish Councils and Village Life*, Tract 106.

In regard to Old Age Pensions, likewise, the Fabians showed the facts which called for a certain law, secured it, and exercised continuous oversight to insure its best operation. After analyzing a pre-election program, they published a report of good or bad conduct on the way in which a party had carried out its pledges. Tract 49, *A Plan of Campaign for Labour* (1894), consists in large part of a reprint of Sidney Webb's *To Your Tents, O Israel*,<sup>54</sup> exposing policies and unpublished reports and showing in case after case the failure of the Liberal Party to carry out its campaign pledges. In 1899, a record year, 164,491 tracts and 26,110 leaflets were distributed. This was chiefly due to the opportune publication of Tract No. 82: *The Workmen's Compensation Act: What It Means and How to Make Use of It*, which was welcomed and used by the Yorkshire Miners, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and the Independent Labour Party, and had over 140,000 copies distributed during the year.<sup>55</sup>

Fabian lecturers enlightened the public incessantly on current issues. Thus, although the Fabian Society acquired little public recognition, and was not mentioned in *The Times* until 1907, its influence was widely felt where its name was unknown. The Education Act of 1902 embodied eleven out of thirteen amendments advocated by the Society.

The first definite chance for the Fabians to hold political office came with the London County Council elections in 1889. The radical interests in London made the Fabian pamphlet *The London Programme* the Progressive Platform of the campaign. In the second County Council election seven Fabians were candidates and four were elected; in the election of 1892 the Progressives swamped the Conservatives at the polls and maintained their dominance almost uninter-

65, *Trade Unionists and Politics*, together sold 50,000 copies in 1896 (*Annual Report*). Tract 66, *A Program for Workers*, was distributed in lots of 5,000 to each Fabian Parliamentary candidate, and thus 50,000 were distributed.

ruptedly until 1907.\* And the Progressives either were the Fabians or expressed Fabian principles. At the end of the 'eighties the various workingmen's clubs of London with a total membership of 25,000 formed the Metropolitan Radical Federation under the direction of Graham Wallas of the Fabian Society. This Federation put out a Radical platform embodying Fabian proposals to which 'nearly every Liberal candidate in London has been compelled to assent.'<sup>56</sup> At the same time John Morley was consulting Sidney Webb about what Radicals should be included in the next Liberal Cabinet. Fabians were active, although not prime movers, in the formation of the Independent Labour Party. In 1911 there were thirteen Fabian members in Parliament, and the number has since increased. But Fabian influence in Parliament has been manifested through the Liberal Party and the Labour Party rather than through the distinctive work of individual members.

The press was still another instrument of Fabian education. Many of the short-lived liberal and radical papers that mushroomed up during the 'eighties and 'nineties were for a time under Fabian influence. *The Speaker*, the weekly Liberal organ, published Fabian articles. *The Star*, founded in 1888, 'was promptly collared,' according to Shaw, who was its musical critic, and who wrote in it, so it was said, 'on every subject under the sun except music.'<sup>57</sup> *To-day* and *Our Corner* each flourished for a time under the editorship of Annie Besant, one of the 'Seven Essayists.' Mr. A. E. Fletcher, a Fabian, was for a time editor of the *Daily Chronicle* and later of the *New Age*. Mr. H. W. Massingham, a Fabian member until 1894, was assistant editor of *The Star*, of the *Daily Chronicle*, and later editor of the *London Nation*. The *New Statesman* started as virtually a Fabian organ.

One trouble with permeation is that it is a two-way

\* Cf. Ch. v. Sidney Webb was for eight years chairman of the Technical Education Board of the Council. Through all this period, the Fabians worked closely with the Trade Union group of the Progressive Party under the leadership of John Burns

process. And concentration upon next steps may mean that ultimate goals become not only impossibly remote but dim in outline. The mature Shaw smiled condescendingly at his revolutionary youth, but Shaw's socialism became indistinguishable from bourgeois liberalism. Lenin referred to him as a good man fallen among Fabians. Ramsay MacDonald was a Fabian, and Webb was a member of the MacDonald Government, but socialism suffered more than Labour benefited by the association. The Fabians became imperialists with the Boer War and Liberals with Campbell-Bannerman, and did not prevent the secession of MacDonald to the 'National' Government.

They helped to free England from the 'perpetual panic' about using the powers of the State, in which Cobden and Bright and Spencer lived. But they were still enough a product of the era of British progress and prosperity to avoid facing the basic questions of political and economic democracy. In this they exemplified rather than carried forward the philosophy of their time.

Unlimited faith in political democracy colored the outlook of British workers as well as the larger number of those who called themselves Socialists, and made them indifferent to the questions raised by Marxian theory. Sidney Webb based his whole argument that socialism was possible and Marxian socialism unnecessary in England on faith in political democracy.

The institutions of government had appeared to become steadily more democratic since 1688. Tangible benefits had accompanied each step of this advance. England had become more and more prosperous, the standard of living had risen, and material comforts had increased. If there were contradictions or difficulties in this onward march of prosperity, there was always a further extension of democracy visible just ahead which would solve them. The Reform Act of 1832 left the workers disenfranchised and rebellious, but further reform embodying the Chartist demands would solve that. The Reform Act of 1867 went as far as enfranchising urban workers. The agricultural workers were still left out, but

then came the Reform Act of 1884. Each extension of the suffrage, moreover, was followed by a flood of social legislation and improvement in general welfare. Always it was possible to take a further political step instead of resorting to revolutionary measures or drastic economic changes. Adam Smith, Bentham, and Mill had provided a philosophy to rationalize this procedure. The religious philosophy of individual responsibility, work as an end in itself, combined with contentment or indifference in regard to material ills, contributed to it. The 'shop-keeping mind' found it easy to add up columns which showed increasing number of votes, square miles of empire, children in schools, and amount of material income. Small wonder that British Socialists, indifferent to the Marxian class-struggle analysis, believed that political democracy had now been attained and all that remained was to apply political democracy to economic problems. Their main emphasis was upon goals which could be achieved without seriously affecting the position of the dominant class. Hyndman called his first 'socialist' book *A Text-Book for Democracy*; the Fabian principle was the permeation of democratic institutions with further democratic procedures. The idea of democracy was basic to all forms of English socialism:

The State against whose interference the popular party waged such bitter war in the first decades of this century . . . was an altogether different thing from the State whose assistance the new democracy is continually invoking and whose power it is bent on increasing today . . . From the time the masses began to be a real factor in political life the State began to be looked upon as something not necessarily inimical to the freedom of the individual and now it is pretty clear to everybody but Prince Kropotkin and Mr. Bradlaugh that the rise of Democracy means the break-up of the so-called Individualism.<sup>58</sup>

I think that the results . . . [of government regulation in the past have been] rather . . . discouraging . . . but those Governments were not Governments like unto those we are about to have . . . I believe ours will be much more properly representa-

tive of an enlightened community than those which took action in the middle ages.<sup>59</sup>

John Rae put the questions that confronted every reform group and confronted England:

the question whether political democracy must end in social, is one that cannot be answered out of hand by deduction from the idea . . .

The future thus stands before us with a solemn choice: property must either contrive to get widely diffused or it will be nationalised altogether; and the fate of free institutions hangs upon the dilemma.<sup>60</sup>

## CONCLUSION





## XI. *Toward Positive Freedom*

APPRAISAL of the significance of any period depends both upon what we regard as of central importance and upon the time from which we view it. Bentham had wished that he might return to earth in a hundred years to see how England looked as a Benthamite Utopia. At the end of the 'eighties, Engels and Webb and Kier Hardie, different as they were, all believed that within their lifetime they were seeing England transformed into a socialist country. By 1906, Engels would have once more denounced Labour as the tail of the Liberal Party and despaired of British socialism as an obstacle to genuine social revolution,<sup>1</sup> but Webb and Kier Hardie were more than ever confident that labor was learning to use parliamentary power as a means to social legislation, socialism, and the good life. *The Reconstruction Program of the British Labour Party* in 1919 showed that the First World War had dashed these hopes only temporarily. But the fate of the two subsequent Labour Governments led even some of the Fabians to believe that 'the introduction of Socialism by the existing Parliamentary procedure is impossible, and that the attempt disables and wastes its leaders.'<sup>2</sup>

Today we are seeing certain fruits of the kind of social change which had a new beginning in the 'eighties. We see the Beveridge Plan, the American social security plan of the National Resources Planning Board, British and American planning for full employment in peace-time, and Churchill's pronouncements on the Post-War World. And we see official Labour still a part of the Coalition Government acquiescing in the curtailment of even such a mild provision for social

security as the Beveridge Plan, and so uncertain of its direction and disorganized within its own ranks that it is more suggestive of the Liberal-Labour Alliance of the 'seventies than of the Independent Labour Party of the 'nineties. The more vigorous elements in the Labour Movement of England are placing their hopes for the future in a redirection and reorganization of the Party.

If we regard it as a genuine sign of desirable social change that the leader of the Conservative Party and the Coalition Government reiterates the desire of his father in the 'eighties that 'The modern State will increasingly concern itself with the economic well-being of the nation' and that 'No one who can take advantage of higher education should be denied this chance,' and places himself and his colleagues as 'strong partisans of national compulsory insurance for all classes, for all purposes, from the cradle to the grave' \*—then we may view the 'eighties as the beginning of a strong people's movement which is gradually bringing England nearer to the building of a better world for men. But, if we regard such statement as only an ill-fitting mask for further absorption by the ruling class of labor and the aims of the people, a thin disguise for attempts of the government to 'simplify and mollify political divergence,' to side-step specific pledges to any 'particular scheme' except those which insure 'a widespread healthy and vigorous private enterprise' †—then we may be inclined to agree with Cole and Laski that the significance of the 'eighties was the 'bourgeoisification' of labor and the abortion of a genuine working-class movement. According to this view a strong, independent people's movement in England is yet to appear.

Before considering these different interpretations we may look at some aspects of the period which are less subject to dispute. Certain changes in England's economic position, external and internal, had become clear by the 'eighties, and

\* Text of Winston Churchill's speech, *New York Times*, 22 March 1943, p. 4. Cf. Ch. VI, pp. 212-15, for similar statements of the 'eighties and 'nineties.

† Ibid.

these made certain ideas untenable. England no longer had easy dominance in world industry and trade; she was no longer—in so far as she ever had been—a country of small competing agricultural and industrial units; the question of the condition of the working class was becoming more difficult to avoid or to dismiss.

It was becoming harder now for England to rely on that 'sure concilience of favorable influences [that] prompted the expansion of Britain's industry and trade' between 1850 and 1875.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, it was much less easy to think in simple terms of the structure of society as 'divinely ordered or logically irrefutable' <sup>4</sup> or to rely unquestioningly on social forces which 'move onwards in their might and majesty and which are marshalled on our side.' <sup>5</sup> In the mid-century there had been little awareness of need for human planning for human good. An administrative nihilism had seemed adequate. Capital and labor, industry and agriculture, would adjust; cities would build themselves; the manifold divergent interests of an increasingly intricate society would order themselves in the best possible way. With individual enterprise directed to individual welfare, the rest—the necessary co-ordination—would occur automatically. Social processes were self-adjusting. Chance was benign.

Economic liberalism was a system that relied upon achieving welfare by indirection. Social welfare would arise from the individual pursuit of personal gain. In this belief men proceeded to grope their way toward an undefined future hand over hand along the quantitative guide-rope of private accumulation of wealth.

This interpretation of individualism was a formula for self-deception. It provided misleading linkages in interpreting social processes, and rested upon the mistaken belief that a particular period in English history represented a universal truth. The giant secular trend inaugurated by the application of machine technology was not discounted as temporary good fortune directly associated with the circumstance that the industrial revolution occurred in Britain in advance of her Continental rivals. Rather, it was identified with the

assumed superior rightness of the British system of economic liberalism. The very continuities in English life, coupled with England's manifest industrial head-start and political stability compared to the Continent, lulled middle-class England into a sense of rightness and permanence in its institutions and its way of life. When in the mid 'seventies English capitalism reached a turning point in its fortunes, Englishmen began to realize apprehensively that the world which Britain had helped to industrialize was overtaking her, that the self-regulating processes no longer worked. A new fear came to England, a new self-questioning. This insecurity was greater because of the caution and anxiety which lay deep in English middle-class character and which had been glossed over but not eradicated by material success. Decline of prosperity was more of a threat because it was in prosperity that men had placed their trust.

At the same time within England, poverty, unemployment, and the demands of the enfranchised people for better things were becoming insistent threats to confidence in self-adjusting social processes and to established English ways of life. Planless international trade and planless economy within England—relying on 'natural law' and 'rational self-direction' or on 'water plentiful and labour docile'—were becoming things of the past. The collectivist movement represented a venture in breaking through a largely automatic conception of man's fate by recognizing 'power' as a potential instrument for good, as well as for ill, in human affairs, and by reasserting the possibilities of human effort in achieving human good.

Long-term material trends, more and more insistently demanding co-ordinated human effort, might still not have been *seen* as requiring human effort had it not been for the mounting pressure of hopes and expectancies, also a product of nineteenth-century England. People had come to regard it as *normal* that there should be peace, expanding prosperity, expanding democracy, improvement in standard of living, in education. Most of Europe might be at war; England and Europe might be in a state of recurrent industrial de-

pression; the majority of the population might live in chronic ignorance and poverty. Yet these things were still 'abnormal' or 'exceptional' in terms of what had come to be the accepted symbols of English life. Hopes created by material abundance, by liberalism, by individual humanitarianism, by political democracy may have been both derivations from the structure of economic life and compensations for deep personal anxieties; but they acquired independent momentum—their own constellations of desires, and of frustration if these desires were not realized.

Liberalism and political democracy were, up to a point, partners; but when political democracy led to expectations which were not being satisfied by economic liberalism, conflict was inevitable. In time of prosperity and peace a rising standard of living for everyone muted this conflict; in time of depression it became acute; with renewed prosperity it could find expression.\* Likewise, humanitarianism, which in the early nineteenth century had been an ornament on the periphery of competitive industrial society to be used in extreme cases but not to the extent of interfering with the economic system, had helped to create standards of decent and humane living which now demanded tangible embodiment in the structure of society itself. Economic liberalism and humane feeling came into direct conflict as liberalism failed to fulfil its promises of automatically producing welfare.

Given the fact that economic liberalism had worn thin and that conflicts were bound sooner or later to undermine the reigning philosophy, how did people more generally become aware of the basic discrepancy between social fact and social theory to which only exceptional individuals had earlier been sensitive?

This is a question which goes to the roots of individual behavior and of social processes, for we are asking how individuals develop greater awareness and how what has previ-

\* See Ch. VII, pp. 276-86, for discussion of the dock strike as a prosperity strike after an earlier period of depression.

ously been accepted as unalterable fact comes to be seen as a social problem which human effort can solve.

The following familiar processes of change appear clearly in the 'eighties.

1. *The deliberate organized attempt to accelerate emerging trends:* The Fabian Society declared, 'The remedy for sweating lies in a quickening of the industrial evolution.'<sup>6</sup> Tom Mann representing Labour urged before the Royal Commission on Labour that the monopoly practiced in industry be extended more widely for both capital and labor.<sup>7</sup> It was increasingly pointed out that, if planning in industry was a good thing, planning was also good in health, in education, in social organization.

2. *The introduction of exceptions to economic liberalism in particular situations:* Factory Acts were not introduced primarily as matters of social justice but were tactical expedients based upon 'collections of little facts,' 'practical remedies for proved wrongs.'<sup>8</sup> Gladstone, adept in the psychology of the market place, made this policy of exception a matter of political expediency:

It is sometimes necessary in politics to make surrenders of what, if not surrendered, will be wrested from us. And it is very wise, when a necessity of this kind is approaching, to anticipate it while it is yet a good way off; for then concession begets gratitude, and often brings a return.<sup>9</sup>

The temporary legislation of Gladstone's Government represented such exceptional procedure. This was notably true of the Irish Land Acts. Such exceptions were sometimes initially regarded as emergency tactics which would actually strengthen rather than threaten economic liberalism; but they established points of reference for the future.

3. *The introduction of such new practices, not at the core of conflict, but as alternate procedures in outlying areas where they were less regarded as a threat to established values:* Social responsibility for housing, health, recreation, which would not have been tolerated if introduced as general measures in Parliament, became established procedure

in Birmingham. Reform of local government occurred in smaller outlying cities before the establishment of the London County Council. More vigorous trade-union policies appeared in the new unions of unskilled workers when they could still make no headway in the old unions. Irish land legislation could be regarded as exceptional while English land was still untouchable. The London School Board, representing a less central area of conflict, could go beyond the London County Council in accustoming people to the idea of spending money for the public good. This method of establishing an alternate procedure in a marginal area made it possible to view familiar problems in new ways. It makes a difference whether of the same social phenomena the question is asked: Should freedom of contract be violated? *or* Should people have decent, healthy homes to live in? Or again, Should the city tax rate be raised? *or* Should the children of London learn to read?

4. *The systematic accumulation of social facts which could not be avoided:* The excessive homage paid to the 'facts' and methods of natural science had the desirable, if limited, result of turning attention to the facts of social living. The 'eighties was 'the second age of Blue Books.' Booth's studies, the Board of Trade Statistics, the ubiquitous Facts of the Fabians threw the inadequate operation of economic liberalism into glaring light. It was this unremitting insistence on facts, widening circle after circle of social awareness—the facts of Booth's surveys, the facts of Royal Commission Reports on Housing, Agriculture, Depression, Labour, and Sweating, popularized by the Fabians—which was the basis for making attention to social conditions for many years the primary issue of British politics.

5. *Bold examples of direct action which dramatized to the public the misery of the people and the possibility of remedy:* The Trafalgar Square riots of 1886 and 1887 were minor examples of this process. The dock strike was a major one. The middle-class Protestant conscience was vaguely uneasy about the condition of the workers; but the middle class had had such firm faith in economic law that

they believed that any attempt to change conditions would increase the evil. Then when a beggar or a scandal thrust a specific case squarely into attention, the pent-up guilt over general conditions flooded to release in doing something about the specific case. This splurge tended to relax into a sense of benevolent complacency. But for weeks the dockers made this repose impossible; they kept the situation of the lowest-paid workers before the public; and this, combined with the fact of their successful organization, left a permanent mark. A chronic weakness in the labor movement had been the seeming hopelessness of the mass of labor below the skilled levels. But given the situation of the restlessness that had succeeded the great depression, and the recognition of futility in labor's efforts to depend upon the Liberal Party, only a few daring examples of successful action were needed to start a landslide.

6. *The creation of a new environment of ideas through statements of new social philosophies:* Bold statements of the urgency of social problems and of the need for basic social change were the work of Marx, Engels, the Avelings, and the Social Democratic Federation. The Federation performed an entirely different function from that of the Fabian Society. The Fabian Society, with all its temporizing and 'inevitability of gradualness,' laid an indispensable foundation of facts for next steps in social change. But the Social Democratic Federation called attention to social evils in drastic terms and demanded bold solutions. Their vociferous declarations, with the accompaniment of agitation in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square, would not let people rest. They did much to prevent the resumption of a blind, quiescent attitude, to insist that the 'exceptional' facts of unemployment and depression and misery were 'normal' in this kind of society and that they must be changed.

Dissatisfaction and desire may be vague and unfocused until they are given verbal forms through which they can be expressed. Once such a new environment of language is provided, new ways of perception are created and the world may henceforth be seen in these terms. The decade of the



eighties was prolific in such new ways of expressing familiar situations. Not only did Marx's main work first appear in English in the 'eighties, but other economists and social philosophers were providing a phrasing of problems in terms of social organization rather than of sole individual responsibility. Marshall stated the change:

Other provisions must be made for those who cannot or will not work. Probably this will never be done satisfactorily till we have braced ourselves to say that being without the means of livelihood must be treated, not as a crime, but as a cause for uncompromising inspection and inquiry.<sup>10</sup>

Henry George, William Morris, Mearns's *Bitter Cry*, Chamberlain's *Radical Programme*, the Fabians as well as the Social Democratic Federation were all providing new ways of seeing England. It became possible to look at English society in terms of the greater importance of human welfare than of private profit, of the greater importance of the right of a family to a decent house than of the right of a landlord to returns on his property, in terms of social organization as supporting rather than threatening individual freedom, and of poverty, ignorance, and disease as problems of group concern rather than of individual morals.

7. *The sharpening of issues through the development of types of behavior opposing and complementing each other, each progressively accentuating the other:*<sup>11</sup> This interstimulating process in the development of new social norms appeared in every area of life. As the leaders of the old trade unions became more and more imbued and satisfied with liberal middle-class values, the incipient radicalism of dissident groups was intensified to the point where they broke away and formed the new unionism and the Independent Labour Party. Within the various forms of organized religion the group which was chiefly concerned with making the Church a living factor in the here-and-now world and the group which devoted itself to maintaining inviolate the other-worldly life of the spirit each intensified the other by their existence and emphasis. Study of science and of the

humanities played the same opposing and intensifying roles in education. Classical economics had been more uncompromising in its emphasis on rational individual responsibility because humanitarianism could be counted on to respond to the worst cases of individual breakdown; humanitarianism could be more irresponsible since common sense and economic law were looking after the main business of life. Attitudes associated with being a leader and being a follower mutually intensified each other. Radical 'excesses' and liberal caution each operated to accentuate and solidify the other.

8. *The change in the position of the middle class:* William Morris wrote:

There was no sign of revolutionary feeling in England twenty years ago: the middle class were so rich that they had no need to hope for anything—but a heaven which they did not believe in: the well-to-do working men did not hope, since they were not pinched and had no means of learning their degraded position: and lastly, the drudges of the proletariat had such hope as charity, the hospital, the workhouse, and kind death could offer them.<sup>12</sup>

The caution, the complacency warding off tension, the moral indignation releasing tension, all characteristic of the middle class, had to find new channels, and they coalesced in new forms. In dealing with problems of health, of housing, of poverty, of education, middle-class fear of radical change, moral indignation against wrong, and imputing of moral value to authority—all worked in the direction of group concern for social welfare as a lesser evil than revolution. While re-housing may be looked upon as 'an insurance paid by the better classes against disease,' it may also be looked upon as an insurance paid by the rich against revolution. The middle class transferred to collectivism what Woodrow Wilson called the Whig theory of Newtonian political dynamics, of poise and balance of forces; but now the checks were applied to individual enterprise and the balances to individual and social relations for the sake of welfare.

9. *The increased power and greater independence of purpose of the working class:* The blurring of significant social linkages under the formula of automaticity had played a part in the docility of labor in the period after the Chartist movement. Since the sole criterion applied by economic liberalism as by Utilitarianism was quantitative, on the assumption that wealth was the necessary basis for welfare, labor, too, tended to believe that difficulties were in the nature of things and could not be altered. Labor was encouraged in this quiescence by the policy of playing second fiddle to the employers, which the old unionism had adopted, and by the fact that prices were falling and real wages increasing. Under the fortuitous hand of a falling price level, British skilled labor was gaining, apparently through the working of the system of economic liberalism, what otherwise it would have had to fight for. And it is not surprising that the revolt against the policy of the old unionism came, despite a continually rising real wage level in the 'eighties, from such marginal, underprivileged groups as the unskilled dockworkers. Nor is it surprising that in its new independence labor was still influenced by belief in continued prosperity and progress. The British Labour Movement, affected by Fabianism, was for the next three or four decades under the illusion of stability and security. It looked to forcing the pace of social legislation under capitalism, without realizing that social legislation may be possible only when there is a surplus prosperity which allows concessions without altering the relative position of social classes. Workers gained power but did not use it to bring about any basic change in social organization.

In none of these processes of change do we find the central social institutions in and of themselves initiating change. Institutions—economic, political, religious, educational—once established in society tend to live on as perpetuations of certain social attitudes at the time of their origin, fortified as they grow older by a bureaucracy which has grown up around the translating of these attitudes into action. Institu-

tions, except in their early stages when they have something to win through social change, are not in themselves primarily oriented toward awareness of or adaptation to new social developments. Intruding events from without or dissident individuals or minority blocs from within may force change. But any firmly established institution tends to be a preserving and stabilizing, not a creative influence.

The problem of why certain individuals have their faces turned toward the future and become prophets or innovators, while others of similar endowment and background keep their faces steadfastly turned toward the past, raises issues of the utmost importance whose answers we do not know; we are only beginning to know how to ask the relevant questions.

Shaw's statement in *Don Juan* may apply more to nineteenth-century character than, as he thought, to human nature in general:

Man gives every reason for his conduct save one, every excuse for his crimes save one, every plea for his safety save one; and that one is his cowardice. Yet all his civilization is founded on his cowardice, on his abject tameness which he calls his respectability.

The question remains why certain persons prefer the possibility of something better to safety. Does ability to perceive change and to create change come from individuals who for some reason are outsiders or are frustrated in their own group? As D. H. Lawrence observes in one of his stories, 'Poor Richard Lovatt wearied himself to death struggling with the problem of himself, and calling it Australia.' Are persons of exceptional sensitivity and perceptiveness always to some degree deviants and outsiders? Are those whose adjustment to their own culture is smooth and 'successful' less likely to recognize any need for change, or do such persons have a basis of security from which they can move more freely? Is hospitality to change in any individual limited so that if he is adventurous in one area he compensates by being more stable elsewhere; or is it a more pervasive char-

acteristic? Is participation in change relative to culture and temperament, so that the innovator of one society might be the stabilizer of another?

Recognition of certain elements of more than passing significance in the 'eighties need not wait upon answers to such questions as these.

Certain interpretations of this period of changing ideas are manifestly inadequate. The new recognition of a social basis for freedom cannot be disposed of by any one simple formula: whether by Marshall's endorsement of the proposition, *Natura non facit saltum*, which he set on the title page of his *Principles of Economics* and explained as meaning that 'economic evolution is gradual and continuous on each of numberless routes'; or by the neo-Marxian theory that the contradictions of capitalism had become so acute that it was necessary to throw more and more sops to the masses to keep them quiet; or by Ortega y Gasset's belief that the education of the masses inevitably results in a corruption of taste of which collectivism is one sign;<sup>13</sup> or by Dicey's explanation that growth of collectivism was a surrender of individual freedom to the irresponsible power of labor and the State; by Halévy's that England had exchanged her birthright of freedom for a mess of Hegelian and Bismarckian pottage; or by the formula that the welfare State is just one more manifestation of the sandy wastes of materialism.

Certainly the decade of the 'eighties was not the dawn of the new social millennium which both Engels and Webb envisaged. But neither was it—nor are the developments which have grown out of it—a backward movement in the history of human freedom.

Mill wrote:

The social problem of the future is how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw materials of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour.\*

\* John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1924, p. 62. Cf. *Liberty*, Introduction, and Ch. IV.

For Mill this inevitably involved the question of the 'nature and limits' of individual freedom and of social control.

Today this problem of the possibilities and conditions of human freedom is even more critical than it was half a century ago. The 'eighties brought no basic change in social institutions which might help to solve it. Nor, except in the case of a few exceptionally discerning persons, did the social philosophy developed in the 'eighties conceive the problem in terms of positive and diversified individual freedom. What this philosophy did do was to clear away some of the arbitrary limits on the range of human possibilities set up by early Protestantism, Utilitarianism, and classical economics and to open the way for wider concepts. It made possible a richer idea of human happiness and of what might be achieved by human effort. Thus the 'eighties was a period of education and preparation, of accustoming people to new ways of seeing England and of interpreting relations among men. It insisted on the urgency of questions of human well-being, enlarged the conception of welfare, and accustomed people to the possibility of social action to help to create individual welfare. It did not bring social revolution, but it helped to make ready the way for it.

In this time of preparation certain things were gained which will continue to be essential when more searching questions are asked and more basic social changes occur. Collectivism and social security as the 'eighties developed them are not freedom, but they help to prepare the soil in which freedom may grow. Decent food and decent housing do not give men spiritual life, but they are a better basis for it than starvation.

The social philosophy of the 'eighties reduced the area of what was 'given' and could not be altered in society and enlarged the area of potentialities which human beings could do something about. It pushed further back the 'laws' of Nature and of God as confining men and began to push back the 'laws' of economic institutions. It restored human initiative in society and brought new expectations and new

possibilities. Men became more sharply aware that institutions are man-made and, therefore, changeable.

The industrial changes of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries had leveled certain walls of inexorability which surround man's life and created new options. It was found that the earth could produce not a scarcity but an abundance of food to sustain physical life. It was not an unalterable law of Nature or of God that nearly three-quarters of all the children born in London should die before reaching the age of five.\* Man could by taking thought add cubits to his stature and length to his life. Between 1841 and 1921 the average life expectancy in England was lengthened by about seventeen years.<sup>14</sup>

In this more open physical world, no longer at the mercy of the 'niggardliness of Nature,' men proceeded to use social institutions as forms of coercion. Economic liberalism had at first been an instrument of greater freedom for an energetic middle class. By turning it into 'unalterable economic law' to which men must conform at their peril they made of it a new prison. Economic liberalism was no longer a belief which could set or keep men free. The 'eighties was a period of beginning to break through the boundaries it had set up.

Freedom had been defined negatively as freedom from restraint. Spencer had insisted that any party concerned with liberty must confine itself to the elimination of evil, 'its proper function,' and should let the achievement of good severely alone. The England represented by Spencer was so confident that it had basic liberty that it failed to see liberty as something that had to be won afresh, and neglected consideration of the necessary conditions of liberty. Freedom, like 'democracy' in America, was regarded as something that could be taken for granted and asserted, not something to be wrought out and achieved. The England of Kier Hardie and Shaw definitely turned in the direction of the achieve-

\* According to the *Lancet* this was the case in 1750. By 1850 the proportion of children born in London who died before five was one-third. (Cole and Postgate, op. cit. p. 134.)

ment of good. It recognized that individual freedom could have a positive social foundation, and that, in de Laveleye's words, well-being might be a condition of liberty.

The recognition that social organization could be a basis for, not necessarily a threat to, individual liberty meant getting beyond a blind fear of power and authority. Freedom had been identified with unhampered economic action. Authority had been a threat, identified with State intervention. But if certain kinds of authority in society might be a potential for human good, then it became possible to consider what kind of structuring of power might achieve this end. Such consideration revived recognition of the relation between economic and political power.

Actually during the dominance of laissez-faire the power of the State had been enhanced. But this was happening behind the scenes or was regarded as exceptional, atypical or incidental, and its importance was not recognized. It was outside the main stream of accepted philosophy. As long as state intervention remained officially offstage, the potentialities in the use of state power for human good could not be fully realized and the difficulties involved in it were not faced and dealt with. The shift of emphasis from preventing bad government to planning good government brought these questions into the area of perception, and, therefore, of intelligent action. It made possible more forthright dealing with the possibilities for both good and evil inherent in state power.

The new philosophy also opened the way for a more fruitful consideration of men's desires. The idea of moral scarcity embodied in Utilitarianism and classical economics tended to shrink the desires of men to the psychology of the market place. The belief that men will work or explore the world only under the 'spur of necessity' or because of envy of the possessions of others, like the belief that happiness consists in 'release of tensions,' arbitrarily limits the range of human potentialities.<sup>15</sup> More than they themselves realized, the earnest philosophers of collectivism were preparing the way



for a reawakened sense of men as active, curious, creative creatures who enjoy exploring their world.

But in some ways the philosophy of the 'eighties was new wine in old wine skins. The limitation of this period even as an experience of preparation was that the emerging social philosophy was still bound by earlier cramping habits of feeling and thought. To the extent that the philosophy of collectivism shared the assumptions of the old atomism, it was simply an alternate position on the same axis.

Caution and avoidance still colored the new philosophy. It is not fantastic to say that middle-class complacency and confidence in material progress was a kind of whistling in the dark, avoiding the vaguely-felt deeper questions of human values. Certainly it is true that with the break in prosperity, anxiety immediately reasserted itself. In one sense, although it was a more direct facing of problems, the philosophy of collectivism was almost as much a philosophy of avoidance as individualism had been. There was still a tendency to state problems negatively in terms not of seeking what men want but of avoiding what they fear: freedom *from* want, from poverty, from anxiety, from ignorance. These were the aims of the welfare State. They still emphasized negative values and external rather than internal security.

In its analysis of the bases of social maladjustments, also, the new philosophy made use of the old concepts. Traditional morality reasserted itself in the philosophy of collectivism by continuing to ask: Who is guilty? Poverty or failure to achieve material success was not, according to the new values, a confession of individual moral inadequacy. Instead, guilt was attributed to the wicked landlord or to the grasping capitalist or to society itself. The question whether there might be a more fruitful way to analyze personality and relations among human beings than in terms of guilt and virtue was not raised. As on many similar issues, the quarrel between individualism and collectivism was bitter because many of the underlying premises were the

same.<sup>16</sup> It was not clear that what was needed was not an alternate position but a new method of analysis.

The philosophers of social welfare prided themselves on being scientific. But, carrying over certain meagre concepts of a mechanistic science, they attempted to analyze highly complex social questions in quantitative rather than in qualitative terms. Ritchie had pointed out that the relation between the power of the individual and of society is not that between two heaps of stones, neither of which can be increased without diminishing the other. But collectivism for the most part continued to phrase the problem largely in over-simplified quantitative terms; in so far as it did so it perpetuated the assumption that individual freedom and social control are opposed to each other—that there is antagonism between the individual and society. The atomistic philosophy of the early nineteenth century had asked *how much* individual freedom can we have by removal of old state restrictions. The collectivist philosophy of the late nineteenth century asked *how much* welfare can be secured by submitting irresponsible individual freedom to social planning and control. The early nineteenth century had been content with a negative individual freedom without adequate consideration either of the necessary social support for freedom or of the diverse kinds of positive freedom that individuals might realize. The late nineteenth century neglected the question of the *kind of* social organization which might further positive individual freedom. Although recognizing a necessary social basis for liberty, collectivism, like individualism, proceeded on the assumption that individual freedom is gained at the expense of social control and *vice versa*. Mill's *Liberty* had attempted to draw an impossible line between individual liberty of action which does not harm others, and should therefore be left completely free, and liberty of action which may harm others, and which therefore justifies interference by the State. But he sought to determine the *nature and limits* of the power which might rightfully be exercised by the State over the individual. The philosophy of the 'eighties continued to concentrate atten-

tion on the question of limits of power, not recognizing that consideration of various possibilities in the *nature* of power might wholly alter the quantitative analysis. It did not consider the kind of social structure which might not only give a welfare basis for, but might enhance and enrich individual freedom.

In their preoccupation with the 'facts' of natural science philosophers of the 'eighties emphasized results rather than processes. They made use of the discoveries of science rather than of the methods of science translated into the different media of social problems. They put Darwin in place of Newton but they tended to use Darwin's conclusions in a rigid and limited fashion as earlier social philosophers had used Newton's. This emphasis on goals and results led to faulty analogies in analyzing social issues. It led, further, to a separation of ends and means, and made possible the justification of manipulating human beings for 'good' ends, which is the negation of democracy. This failure to recognize values as implicit in the means used, rather than separate from them, and the emphasis on rigidly defined goals rather than on directions dominated the early collectivist, as they had the early individualist period. Men believed that they could find easy answers to all questions in the light of common day.

The false dichotomies between the individual and society and between means and ends were not the only ones which restricted the thinking of this period. On a number of other issues people tended to think in polarities or in opposites, and thereby to shut off certain possibilities of understanding of relationships. Implicitly or explicitly their approach to problems assumed conflict between reason and insight, between science and art, between flesh and spirit, between materialism and idealism. They tended to ask of proposed solutions to problems: Is it good or bad? right or wrong? true or false? useful or useless? rather than: For what purposes, under what circumstances, to what extent, is it any of these things? Such questions as these last can lead to imaginatively directed and precise thinking rather than to either a futile relativism or a retreat to absolutism.

Today more than ever such thinking is needed when new false dichotomies are appearing in the analyses of social issues; and men are urged to find salvation in narrowly conceived blueprints of a new social order or in capitulating to an opposite but equally narrow neo-medievalism in education. The fact that British liberal social philosophy tended to make negative freedom and empty 'rights' ends in themselves does not mean that a remedy is to be found in recourse to a philosophy of arbitrary collectivism and dogmatic authority. Individuality is not something given but something to be wrought out in a rich social setting. It is the creation of individuals that is the aim of a free democratic society.

The philosophy of the 'eighties did not fully conceive the possibilities of such individuality, or the possibilities of individual and group action mutually enhancing and enriching each other, or of a society in which men would not be manipulated even for their own good, or where the goals of life would be more than security and success. It helped, however, to lay down a basis which would make such a society possible. The spontaneous individual freedom of which Mill wrote, and which Matthew Arnold sought in *The Buried Life*, and Shaw in *Saint Joan*, would be the fruits of this society. The realization of the kind of social structure which will enhance this creative positive freedom for individuals still lies in the future.

■

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